

Canada's Folk, Roots and World Music Magazine

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Amadou & Mariam

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Galitcha

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Quebec's Traditional

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Les Gitans de Sarajevo

Issue No. 26
Summer 2005



Fifth Anniversary Issue

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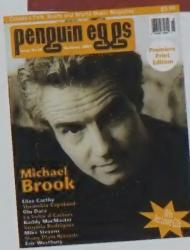
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The Fifth Anniversary Issue



Fact: almost 95 percent of new magazines fail within the first year. So Penguin Eggs has beaten rather long odds to reach its fifth anniversary intact. Not quite the landmark of 50 years the venerable Sing Out! passed in 2000. But someday, you never know.

Starting a specialty magazine from scratch in a bilingual country the size of Canada certainly reinforces the old saying: 'ignorance is bliss.' Challenges? Oh yes, there have been a few. Like trying to get the welders on a construction site to briefly stop grinding while I flogged ads on my cell-phone. But pure blind faith and a lot of help from friends, writers, reviewers and supporters pulled us through.

Numerous people deserve thanks for getting us this far, too many to attempt to mention. But let me tell you about Mitch Podolak. Mitch started the

Winnipeg and Vancouver folk festivals. At the Calgary folk festival in 2003 he came up with the idea of getting up at 7 a.m. and selling magazines to the audience waiting in line for the gates to open. Nobody can say no to Mitch. Honestly, he could sell the Brooklyn Bridge.

By the end of the summer he had recruited that lovely man, Chris White, to do the same thing in Edmonton and Ottawa. Chris is the artistic director of the Ottawa folk festival, and there he was flogging magazines outside the gates of his own venue. Brilliant. Both of them were also instrumental in starting the Penguin Eggs breakfast at the annual Ontario Council of Folk Festivals' conference. So it's generous deeds like these that have really helped to raise the magazine's profile. So a huge thanks to all who helped in every essential way to get us this far.

Of course, Penguin Eggs could not possibly exist without the adverts our music community has bought over the years. To reiterate what Ian Anderson at Roots – the magazine that directly inspired Penguin Eggs – wrote in his editorial celebrating his magazine's 25th anniversary issue in 2004: 'We especially appreciate those who have understood that helping to keep an independent, enthusiastic-driven magazine alive has an importance to the whole scene that goes way beyond simply selling your own product.' How absolutely true.

You'll notice that every issue of this magazine features an advert from The Edmonton Folk Music Festival. That's a result of its producer Terry Wickham's commitment to support media outlets that directly champion the music his event presents. The good people at Borealis Records took a similar generous stance. Laura Fraser at Warner Music Canada, too. I tip the brim of my best bonnet to all of you.

Penguin Eggs started out with 40 pages and Michael Brooks on the cover in the summer of 2001. This issue is twice that size with almost ten times as many ads. The logo too has changed, again. But alterations haven't stopped there. We have now introduced a French section after discussions with Dana Whittle and Gilles Garand from Folquébec. We've also added Short Cuts – brief but tasty features – and a celebrity Top-10 chart for a bit of fun. The biggest overhaul, however, is in our record reviews, which are now shorter and crisper. And we've also separated compilations, soundtracks, re-releases and box-sets. It's all aimed at making the magazine more accessible for you the reader, without whom there really would be no point. My sincere thanks.

– Roddy Campbell

A Bunch of Fives

Five great Canadian records released in the past five years

Be Good: Tanyas, Blue Horse
The Bills: Let 'Em Run
David Francey: Far End of Summer
Lhasa: The Living Road
Harry Manx: Dog My Cat

Five great international records
Manu Chao, Radio Bemba Sound
Fiamma Fumana, Hope
Shooglenifty, The Arms Dealers'
Daughter,
Tinariwen, Amassakoul
Virginia Rodrigues, Nós

Five great musical DVDs
Mariza: Live In London
Kate Rusby Live From Leeds
Richard Thompson: Live in Providence
Various: American Roots Music
Various: Festival In the Desert



Lauren St. John: Hardcore
Troubadour: The Life and Near Death of Steve Earle

Five great musical books
Bob Dylan: Chronicles Vol. 1
Liam Clancy: The Mountain of the Women: Memoirs of an Irish Troubadour
Shirley Collins: America Over the Water
Colin Irwin, In Search of the Craic: One Man's Pub Crawl Through Irish Music



"I remember thinking, 'Sarah McLachlan? Who is in the hell is she?' She's just started. I'm opening for her? She should be opening for me.' I was not really excited about the idea."

– Stephen Fearing, Issue No. 14

(Stan Rogers) just had that big voice...
He got the gift from God... He was a great singer."

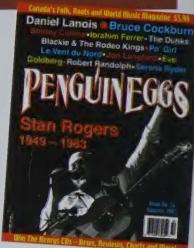
– Daniel Lanois, Issue No. 18

"One of the great songwriters of the 20th century, Joni Mitchell. I heard her at the Mariposa Festival when she was only 20 years old, pushing her latest song The Circle Game. At every workshop she sang that song. It was rather silly... I think she learned better."

– Pete Seeger, Issue No. 20

"I'm not sure I'll ever get the hang of the protocol surrounding Canadian tarp culture – in the UK we have a name for people who get up early to mark their territory: Germans."

– Colin Irwin, Issue No. 23



Cover story

42 . . . Legendary producer Sam Phillips threatened to kick John Prine's ass and subsequently saved his life. Now after a decade on the sidelines — recovering from neck cancer, raising kids and playing for the occasional free pints in Irish pubs — Prine has finally released a new recording, *Fair & Square*. It has the usual motley crew of colourful, blue-collar characters, a smattering of homespun wisdom, the odd belly laugh and all of it wrapped up in deceptively simple but memorable tunes. Oh, did we mention the vitriol?

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Quotable

"I'm not overly political . . . but I don't happen to like how the Bush administration puts a spin on dissenters. You know: 'You don't support the troops because you don't support the war.' That's an old piece of bull shit they used during Vietnam. I support the troops. I support the troops getting home safe. Get them out of Iraq; we don't belong there." — John Prine

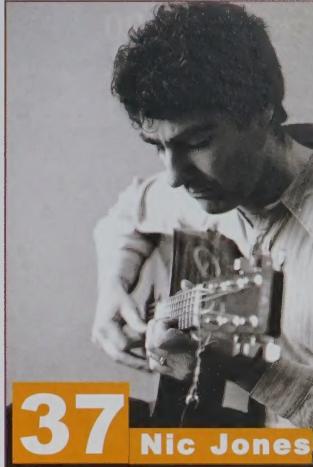
"I'm obligated to say that my life has been changed by the gospel of Christ and the things that he did to turn my life around" — Michelle Shocked

Sheet Music

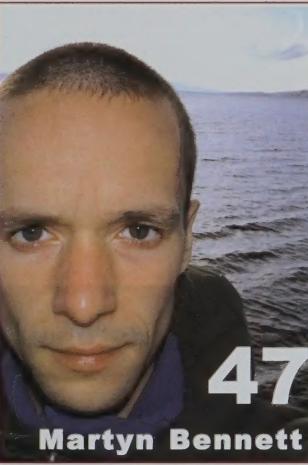
- 76 . . . The Female Rambling Sailor:
Trad. Arranged by Ian Robb



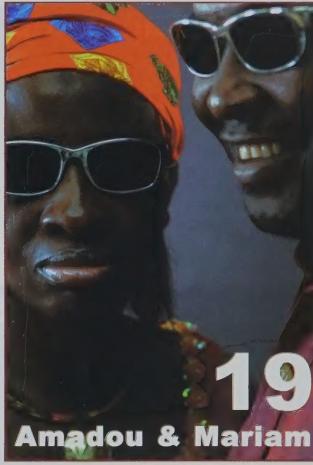
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Chuck & Joni Mitchell, 1967

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PENGUIN
Eggs
Spring
2005

Interviews, Short Cuts, Features, Tubthumping...

ckua top 20

- Various Artists
- Blind Boys of Alabama
- Jack Johnson
- Thievery Corporation
- Lynn Miles
- Mary Gauthier
- Bramwell & The Leftovers
- Sofie de Portugal
- Andrew Bird
- Beck
- Kathleen Edwards
- Blue Rodeo
- Various Artists
- Tori Amos
- Joel Plaskett
- M. Ward
- Eivør
- Nanci Griffith
- John Hammond
- Captain Tractor

The most-played, folk, roots and world music discs on ckua radio – www.ckua.org – throughout April

- World Grove
 - Atom Bomb
 - In Between Dreams
 - Cosmic Game
 - Love Sweet Love
 - Mercy Now
 - Self-titled
 - Origem
 - Andrew Bird...
 - Guero
 - Back To Me
 - Are You Ready
 - Afro-Latin Party
 - The Beekeeper
 - La De Da
 - Transistor Radio
 - Eivør
 - Hearts In Mind
 - In Your Arms Again
 - North of the Yellowhead
- (Putumayo)
(Real World)
(Universal)
(Beggars Group)
(True North)
(Universal)
(Independent)
(Promo Evento)
(Festival)
(Geffen)
(Universal)
(Warner)
(Putumayo)
(Sony)
(Maple Music)
(Merge)
(Spirit River)
(New Door)
(EMI)
(Six Shooter)



Lynn Miles

soundscapes top 10

- Beck
- Martha Wainwright
- Decemberists
- Great Lake Swimmers
- Magnolia Electric Company
- Nick Cave
- M. Ward
- Various Artists
- Bright Eyes
- Kathleen Edwards

Compiled from April sales at Soundscapes, 572 College St., Toronto, Ontario, M6G 1B3

- Guero
 - Marth Wainwright
 - Picaresque
 - Bodies And Minds
 - What Comes After The Blues
 - B-Sides & Rarities
 - Transistor Radio
 - Love's A Real Thing...
 - I'm Wide Awake...
 - Back To Me
- (Geffen)
(Universal)
(Kill Rock Stars)
(WeeWerks)
(Secretly Cnd.)
(Mute)
(Merge)
(Luaka Bop!)
(Saddle Creek)
(Universal)



Kathleen Edwards

le disquaire top 15

- Martha Wainwright
- Mara Tremblay
- Jack Johnson
- Mary Gauthier
- Amadou & Mariam
- Jim Cochrane
- Ariel Dombasle
- Rachid Taha
- Lila Downs
- Paolo Conte
- Kelly Joe Phelps
- The Ditty Bops
- Quadro Nuevo
- Vic Chestnutt
- Souad Massi

Compiled from April sales at Sillion Le Disquaire, 1149 Rue Cartier, Québec, Québec.

- Martha Wainwright
 - Les Nouvelles Lunes
 - In Between Dreams
 - Mercy Now
 - Dimanche à Bamako
 - Pages Blanche
 - Amor, Amor
 - Tékitoi
 - Una Sangre
 - Elegia
 - Tap The Red Cane Whirwind
 - Self-titled
 - Mocca Flor
 - Ghetto Bells
 - Deb
- (Universal)
(Audiogramme)
(Universal)
(Universal)
(Warner Bros)
(Audiogramme)
(Novem)
(Universal)
(One Blood)
(Warner)
(Rykod)
(Warner)
(Justin Time)
(EMI)
(Universal)



Amadou & Mariam

david francney's favourite 10 records

- Planxty
- The Band
- The Beatles
- John Hartford
- John Prine
- Bruce Cockburn
- Joni Mitchell
- Neil Young
- Willie P. Bennett
- Paul Brady

- Planxty
 - Music From The Big Pink
 - Abbey Road
 - AeroPlane
 - John Prine
 - Sunwheel Dance
 - Hejira
 - After The Gold Rush
 - Trying To Start Out Clear
 - Welcome Here Kind Starnger
- (Shannachie)
(Columbia)
(Apple)
(Rounder)
(Atlantic)
(True North)
(Geffen)
(Reprise)
(Bnatural)
(Mulgigian)



David Francney

hmv top 20

Compiled from April all sales at HMV stores across Canada

- John Prine
- Era
- Bebo & Cigala
- Ian Tyson
- Buena Vista Social Club
- Amadou & Mariam
- Various Artists
- Various Artists
- B.B. King
- Aventura
- Corb Lund Band
- Gipsy Kings
- Etta James
- Manuel Guajiro Mirabel
- The Duhks
- Taima
- Ani DiFranco
- Lhasa
- Alison Krauss
- Wailin' Jennys

- Fair & Square
 - Best Of...
 - Lagrimas Negras
 - Songs From A Gravel Road
 - Buena Vista Social Club
 - Dimanche a Bamako
 - Lady Sings The Blues Again
 - Celtic Woman
 - Ultimate Collection
 - We Broke The Rules
 - Five Dollar Bill
 - Greatest Hits
 - Her Best
 - Buena Vista Social...Presents
 - The Duhks
 - Taima
 - Knuckle Down
 - Living Road
 - Lonely Runs Both Ways
 - 40 Days
- (Oh Boy!)
(Universal)
(Calle)
(Stony Plain)
(World Circuit)
(Warner Bros.)
(EMI)
(Manhattan)
(Geffen)
(Premium)
(Stony Plain)
(Warner)
(Chess)
(World Circuit)
(Sugar Hill)
(Diet Fusion III)
(Festival)
(Audogramme)
(Rounder)
(Jericho Beach)

megatunes top 10

Compiled from April sales at Megatunes in Calgary and Edmonton

- John Prine
- Joni Mitchell
- Martha Wainwright
- Lucinda Williams
- Beck
- Mary Gauthier
- Jack Johnson
- Various Artists
- Blue Rodeo
- Van Morrison

- Fair & Square
 - Songs of a Prairie Girl
 - Martha Wainwright
 - Live
 - Guero
 - Mercy Now
 - In Between Dreams
 - Verve Remixed
 - Are You Ready
 - Magic Time
- (Oh Boy!)
(Warner)
(Universal)
(Lost Highway)
(Geffen)
(Universal)
(Universal)
(Verve)
(Warner)
(Exile)

galaxie top 5

Compiled from the most-played Canadian albums on CBC Galaxy Network FolkRoots Channel throughout May

- Kathleen Edwards
- Justin Rutledge
- Geoff Berner
- Ian Tyson
- Joe Grass

- Back To Me
 - No Never Alone
 - Whiskey Rabbi
 - Songs From A Gravel Road
 - Joe Grass
- (Universal)
(Six Shooter)
(Black Hen)
(Stony Plain)
(Independent)

sam's top 20

Compiled from April sales at Sam The Record Man 1656 Barrington Street, Halifax, NS.

- Joel Plaskett
- Bruce Springsteen
- Todd Snider
- Feist
- Jack Johnson
- Blue Rodeo
- Kate Rusby
- John Prine
- Rokini Traore
- Kathleen Edwards
- Martha Wainwright
- Jill Barber
- Kim Barlow
- The Duhks
- Ian Tyson
- Jonathan Richman
- Solomon Burke
- Mary Gauthier
- David Clayton Thomas
- Nathaniel Mayer

- La De Da
 - Devils and Dust
 - East Nashville Skyline
 - Let It Die
 - In Between Dreams
 - Are You Ready
 - Underneath The Stars
 - Fair & Square
 - Bowmboi
 - Back To Me
 - Martha Wainwright
 - Oh Heart
 - Luckyburden
 - The Duhks
 - Songs From A Gravel Road
 - Not So Much To Be Loved As
 - Make Do With What You've Got
 - Mercy Now
 - Aurora
 - I Just Want To Be Held
- (Maple Music)
(Sony)
(Oh Boy!)
(Interscope)
(Universal)
(Warner)
(Compass)
(Warner)
(Universal)
(Umbrella)
(Caribou)
(Sugar Hill)
(Stony Plain)
(Sanctuary)
(Shout)
(Universal)
(Justin Time)
(Fat Possum)

JOHN REISCHMAN

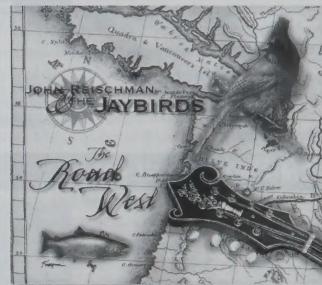
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The Georgia Straight, January, 2005



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Billboard, February 5, 2005



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Exclaim Magazine

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The Gauntlet

"Geoff Berner is one of the greatest songwriters I know of to date"
Brand X Media



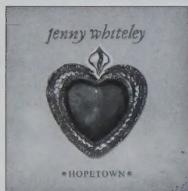
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Umbrella Music

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Hopetown

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The Echo



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Times Colonist



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Jenny Whiteley Hopetown



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Jim Byrnes
Fresh Horses



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Canada

Ry Cooder Chavez Ravine

Three years in the making, Ry Cooder's "Chavez Ravine" is a tribute to the long-gone Los Angeles Latino enclave.

"I liked riding through Los Angeles when I was a kid...it was my favourite thing to do. But I never went to Chavez Ravine. I heard about it in the early '50's: the evictions, the power struggle in city hall a scant mile away, the Pachuco Scare, The Red Scare, and the greasy handoff of the ravine to the Dodgers ball club. Occasionally there would be photographs in the paper of some poor Mexican family from the ravine watching some bulldozer tear up their little house while being harassed by the LAPD or lectured to by some city politician. I didn't understand any of this until later, long after the deal had gone down. In those days, they called such things 'progress'."

- Ry Cooder.



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penguin eggs

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10942 80 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta
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Tel: (780) 433-8287

Fax: (780) 437-4603

www.pinguineggs.ab.ca
e-mail: pinguineggs@shaw.ca

Editor: Roddy Campbell

Managing Editor: Annemarie Hamilton
Production: Doug Swanson and Terry Wickham.

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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones's wonderful album *Penguin Eggs* — a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for such young, gifted performers as Kate Rusby and Eliza Carthy.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. He now seldom performs. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes *Penguin Eggs* such an outrageously fine recording. This magazine strives to reiterate that spirit. Nic Jones' *Penguin Eggs* is available through Topic Records.

Penguin Eggs is published and printed in Canada and acknowledges the generous financial support from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Government of Canada through the Publications Assistance Program and the Canada Magazine Fund toward our mailing, editorial and production costs.

Canada



Alberta
Foundation
for the Arts



Canada Council
for the Arts

editorial

Flip through these pages and you'll find cool advertisements for such folk, roots and world music magazines as fRoots, Sing Out!, The Living Tradition and Dirty Linen. Great publications, all of them. These ads we swap amongst ourselves in order to help publicise and support each other.

Here's a telling example: I needed photos for the Nic Jones tribute piece in this issue and e-mailed fRoots editor Ian Anderson. They were on my computer the next day. All he wanted was a photo credit. Mark Moss editor of Sing Out! supplied the photo of Moses Asch on the following page. Some response: "Just credit the magazine." I also wrote to Ian's long-standing photographer Dave Peabody for much the same reason, but wondered what it might cost to run a few of his original prints. "What can you afford?" Dave wrote back. Somehow, I suspect you might not get the same response from Mark Seliger or Annie Leibovitz at Rolling Stone.

What's even more interesting, Ian invited Mark to write the editorial for fRoots' May issue and he subsequently criticised a campaign Ian launched against American culture.

The folk community is like that though, open-minded, collaborative rather than competitive, and often magnanimous with its resources and encouragement. It is really populated with individuals who actually care about this precious, life-affirming music of ours.

Examples abound. On a day to day basis you can hear it in the unbridled enthusiasm of radio hosts on community stations all across the country as they extol the virtues of their latest discovery from Mali or Manitoba. These loveable radio rogues relish playing politically-charged, thought-provoking tracks that are censored by exclusion from more commercial stations. All power to their antennas. Just try requesting Steve Earle's *The Revolution Starts Now* at your local country station. Fat chance.

In many ways, folk festivals are the public face of folk music in Canada and in particular their artistic directors. They make up a small intimate fraternity with a consistent willingness to share information and insights with each other. Most hold dear the unwritten law that their events must promote and encourage a fair percentage of local, provincial and national talent, and strive for a balance between male and female performers. Such integrity. Such commitment. Such principles.

While the vast majority of popular culture is now directed towards a mental capacity consistent with that of a newt's, it's smugly gratifying to know the folk community clearly holds the moral high-ground.

— By Roddy Campbell

9
PENGUIN
EGGS
Summer
2005

Editorial

news...gossip...rumour...tattle

The Folkways Alive! at the University of Alberta in Edmonton officially opened its interactive centre May 16. It houses one of only two complete collections of the Folkways label founded in 1948 by legendary producer **Moses Asch** (1905-1986). The other collection is in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC, and contains the same quintessential recordings by the likes of **Woody Guthrie**, **Hughie Leadbetter (Leadbelly)** and **Pete Seeger** as well as the colourful LPs of sounds of frogs and rainforests. (the latter thought to have been recorded in a shower).

Folkways Alive! now has all 2,168 LPs completely digitized and with their extensive sleeve notes, some over 35 pages long, available on computers. They are accessible to the public and situated in suite 3-47 of the old Fine Arts Building. As one wag noted, listening to this collection 40 hours a week would take over two years.

The facility received \$480,000 in funding from the federal Western Economic Diversification branch. While it includes computerized listening posts, it also has a small studio where interviews can be recorded. **Country Joe MacDonald** and **Ramblin' Jack Elliott** are amongst those already interviewed.

CKUA Radio and **Stony Plain Records** are other partners responsible for sponsoring world music concerts, workshops and scholarships.

Moses Asch initially donated the collection to the U of A in 1985, while his son **Michael Asch** was a professor of anthropology there. Michael is now retired and living in Victoria, BC.

"My father would be very impressed," Michael told the Edmonton Journal. "Edmonton has this amazing surprise for the larger world with such a great arts scene generally, and this is a gem that the province needs to treasure and protect. Now it's one of the major sites in North America with such a wonderful means of access and so many nodes and connections to expand on."

Folkways Alive! plans to hold an Art Exhibit in December of such celebrated artists as **Ben Shahn**

and **David Stone Martin**, who designed the initial distinct covers for Folkways records. There is also the possibility of a compilation CD in the works for the Smithsonian/Folkways Classic Series, which will feature the best of Canadian folk songs in the Folkways collection. For more on Folkways Alive! see Penguin Eggs Issue No. 22.



In other Smithsonian news, it will host The Smithsonian Folklife Festival in Washington, DC, June 30 to July 11, 2006. It will feature exclusively Alberta's musicians, singers, craftsmen and women, and workers involved in traditional industries such as cattle ranching or coal mining. The event will be staged outdoor on The National Mall – a large grassy park surrounded by the capital's national museums. The Smithsonian has staged similar events once a year for the past 40 years. They attract upwards of a million people. Curator **Nancy Groce** will put the program together and has already earmarked **Maria Dunn** and **John Wort Hannam** for her shortlist. Past festivals have celebrated the music and culture of Scotland. This summer – June 23 through July 5 – it is the turn of Oman.



The New York Times News Service, April 11, 2005, released a list of songs US President **George Bush** listens to on his iPod. Juno winners **Blakie & The Rodeo Kings' "Swinging From The Chains of Love"** were among those songs included. It was written by **Tom Wilson** and **Stephen Fearing** for their 2003 album **BARK**.

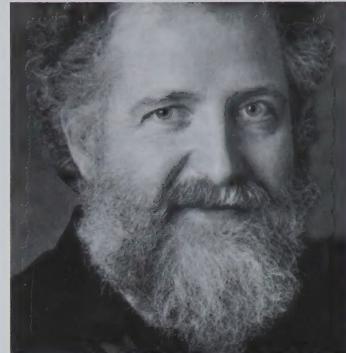
"People think I should be embarrassed by it, but it doesn't mean anything to me," says Fearing. "What was good was the attention it generated. It got us on the cover of The National Post [Canada's national conservative newspaper] for a record that is two years old. But I can't imagine George Bush sitting at his computer downloading our song onto his iPod. It must have been one of his assistants. Tom Wilson had the best quote about it all. He said, 'I bet the fucker downloaded it illegally'."

Folkways Alive! centre now officially open:



Photo by: Jeffrey W. Greenbaum

Folkways Alive! centre now officially open:



Ken Whiteley: Estelle Klein Award winner

Van Morrison and **Alejandro Escovedo** were also on the list.



Leonard Cohen and **Estelle Klein** are the latest inductees honored by The Canadian Folk Music Walk of Fame. Both will have their names forged on brass maple leafs made by Alloy Foundry in Merrickville, ON – Canada's oldest working foundry. These plaques will then be cemented into the sidewalks of Ottawa's Bank Street, at a special ceremony Saturday, September 10. The Walk of Fame will announce further inductees in December. Those currently enshrined on Bank Street include **Joni Mitchell**, **Stan Rogers** and **Gordon Lightfoot**. For further information contact www.folkwalk.ca



Ken Whiteley will receive the 2005 Estelle Klein Award at the 19th annual Ontario Council of Folk Festivals conference, taking place in Kingston, ON, in October. For almost 30 years, Whiteley has contributed to the Ontario folk community as a musician, producer, teacher and festival artistic director. He has performed with the likes of folk and blues legends such as Pete Seeger and Lonnie Johnson, and has most recently record-



Photo: Courtesy Sing Out!

Francis & Moses Asch

ed with Mose Scarlett and Jackie Washington (Scarlett, Washington & Whiteley) and brother Chris (The Whiteley Brothers).

Ken has also produced children's music albums for the likes of **Raffi**, **Fred Penner**, **Cathy Fink** and **Al Simmons**. Not surprisingly, he has received twenty Juno nominations for his work as a producer and six as a musician. Whiteley was also the artistic director of the Mariposa folk festival – a position **Estelle Klein** held for almost 20 years. It is largely a tribute to her work there that the OCFF's Estelle Klein Award honours individuals contributing to Ontario's folk music community.

In other OCFF news, the early, early bird, member-only, Conference registration rate is available until July 31. The fee is \$130 and includes the Penguin Eggs Breakfast and Gala Dinner. Also, **Magoo** (aka **Bruce McGregor**) has accepted the position of conference programmer. He will be responsible for all aspects of programming. For further information go to www.ocff.ca



The Be Good Tanyas recently wrote and recorded, *Opal's Blues* for the soundtrack of **Wayne Wang's** film *Because of Winn-Dixie*. The Tanyas also have *The Littlest Birds* appearing in a Zeller's ad and are currently working on their third album, scheduled for release September 16. They will make appearances at several Canadian folk festivals throughout the summer.



CBC Radio's **Bill Stunt** will host *Fuse* – a new national folk show – which starts July 3 and runs to September 4. It will air on CBC One on Sunday mornings at 11 am and on Radio Two the same day at a time yet to be confirmed. Recorded live in the studio in front of an audience, the format will be akin to a folk festival workshop. Each program will feature at least two well known Canadian songwriters. They will be asked to perform their own material as well as songs written by artists they admire and have been influenced by. The two guests will collaborate on tunes too. Some have agreed to co-write a tune especially for the show. "We're hoping it will generate some creative sparks and be an entertaining and revealing experience for the audience," says Stunt. Scheduled artists include **Jenny Whiteley**, **Kathleen Edwards**, **Lynn Miles**, **Mighty Popo** and **Hawksley Workman**.



Lynn Miles on CBC Radio

The first Canadian Folk Music Awards, set for the Museum of Civilization in Gatineau in December, has increased its categories to eighteen. They include Best Traditional and Best Contemporary sections. There are also three Best Songwriter categories for Aboriginal, English and French performers. For details on submission requirements, deadlines, category criteria, illegibility and general information go to www.canadianfolkmusicawards.ca



The North American Folk Alliance announced in May that it selected **Louis Jay Meyers** as its new executive director. Meyers replaces outgoing director **Phyllis Barney** June 1. He is one of the four founders and directors of Austin's successful South by Southwest music conference and has worked as an artist manager, agent and club presenter. President Tom Neff, speaking on behalf of the Folk Alliance Board, says, "We conducted an extensive search for our new executive director, and it quickly became clear that Louis had the combination of skills and experience that Folk Alliance needs right now to shepherd the organization through our transition to Memphis and beyond. I'm excited about what Louis will bring to the Folk Alliance, and know that he'll take us forward in new and exciting directions." The Alliance will move permanently to Memphis in 2007, but runs February 16 - 19, 2006, in Austin, Texas.



Ian Tyson was admitted to Union Hospital in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, April 16, after suffering chest pains and shortage of breath. Diagnosed with pericarditis (an inflammation of the tissue surrounding the heart), Tyson was placed in intensive care overnight but responded well to medication. He has since made a full recovery and performed for **Queen Elizabeth II** during her recent trip to Alberta to celebrate the province's centenary in May. Artistic director **Terry Wickham**, of the Edmonton Folk Music Festival, was one of a host of dignitaries that had supper with the Queen during her stay in Edmonton.

Bernie Finklestein, founder of True North Records and manager of **Bruce Cockburn**, underwent major heart surgery, this past spring. He is recovering slowly but set to take part in the celebrations marking True North's 30th anniversary.

Long John Baldry was also hospitalised due to

a lung infection. He remains in intensive care as we go to press and has cancelled a number of dates. Noted American bluegrass fiddler, **Vassar Clements**, has been diagnosed with lung cancer. Well-wishers can get in touch through his website at www.vassarclements.com **Mary Travers**, of **Peter, Paul & Mary**, was released from hospital in New York in late May after a successful bone marrow transplant to combat leukemia. For updates on her recovery go to peter-paulandmary.com Also on the mend from respiratory problems caused by a faulty heart valve is British folk singer and comedian **Vin Garbutt**. He had to cancel several appearances this past spring and will undergo surgery in the near future.



Summerfolk Music And Crafts Festival, held on southern Georgian Bay in Owen Sound, ON, celebrates its 30th anniversary August 19-21, under its new artistic Director **Liz Harvey-Foulds**. 'Celebrate The Past - Embrace The Future' is the theme for this year's event as it pays tribute to its first three decades and looks to the future. Organisers promise more open stages, contra dancing and the formation of a choir made up from audience members, which will perform on Sunday night main stage. The lineup includes **Garnet Rogers**, **Reggae Cowboys**, **Eliza Gilkyson** and **Justin Rutledge**. Tickets for the complete Summerfolk, line up are available at www.summerfolk.org



The Sleeping Giant Folk Music Society in Thunder Bay, ON recently announced a new partnership with Magnus Theatre. Thunder Bay's premier professional theatre company. This affiliation will give the Society access to a 225 soft-seat facility and full technical support. Performers booked for its 2005-2006 season include **John Gorka**, **Dave Gunning** and **Suzie Vinnick**. For further information go to www.sleepinggiant.ca or email etose@tbaytel.net.



A new non-profit group, Les Productions Le Moulin, intends to bring quality folk and roots music to the isolated French Acadian peninsula of southwestern Nova Scotia known as the



Dave Gunning at Thunder Bay



Eliza Gilkyson at Summerfolk



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Mavis Staples: W.C. Handy winner

Municipality of Clare, or Saint Mary's Bay. Led by free-lance journalist Paul-Emile Comeau, the Le Moulin committee, which is loosely aligned with the local arts council, plans to present at least six small venue concerts per year by a variety of professional groups and solo performers. Its first concert with Alan Gerber took place on Thursday March 31, and sold out. Future shows include Duane Andrews and his brand of Newfoundland Gypsy jazz (June 9), Les Chauffeurs à Pieds (August 4), Téada (October 13), and others that have yet to be confirmed. For more information contact: pcm.comeau@ns.sympatico.ca



David Franey and Mike Ford of Moxy

Fruvous have been researching the history of the Great Lakes shipping industry and will spend two weeks aboard a laker – one of the Great Lakes freighters in June. They'll bring cameras and recording equipment and will take pictures, do interviews and gather sound for a multi-media presentation to be produced when they get back. They'll spend the summer working on it and writing a song cycle about the experience. When it's completed, they'll visit port towns around the lakes, present their multi-media project at schools and perform the songs in concert.

Allen Dobb's new disc, *Rosetown*, will be distributed nationally by Warner Music Canada June 1. Produced by John Ellis (**Jeremy Fisher and Be Good Tanyas**), it is a musical journey through Dobb's prairie experience s. His upcoming concerts include: June 16 Cowboy Coffee, 229 Victoria St., Kamskoo, BC; June 17 Arts Space, 1685-3rd Avenue, Prince George, BC; June 18 The Old Church, 3704 1st Ave., Smithers, BC; June 20 Pyramid Lake Resort, Jasper National Park, AB; June 22 The Sidetrack Café, 10333-112 St., Edmonton, AB; June 23 Second Street Theatre, 10130 - 98 Avenue, Grande Prairie, AB; June 24-26 The North Country Fair, Driftpile, AB.



After twenty years of performing together, England's **Artisan** will disband, November 5. They will, however, make one last tour of Canada this August and will perform at the likes of Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival and Summerfolk. From touring Canada throughout the

past 10 years, the band's Jacey Bedford got to know Tanglefoot, James Keelaghan, Eileen McGann, Valdy and Haines & Leighton. She subsequently books them through Jacey Bedford Tour Management for tours of the UK. Two members of Artisan will join the Brian Bedford Band in November to form a five-piece that hopes to return to Canada in 2007.



Cape Breton Island's **Béotach** [see P.E. Issue No.25] have signed with booking agency Jensen Music International out of Charlottetown, PEI. The likes of Kate and Anna McGarrigle and Danú are on Jensen's roster. As are The Cottars, who will join The Chieftains in Charlottetown on July 17. This is The Chieftains only Canadian date this summer. The connection between the two bands dates back to May of last year when they both performed for a CBC Television special. At that time, Paddy Malone was quoted as saying, "It's only a matter of time before The Cottars take the world by storm."



The annual Juno Awards were held in Winnipeg in April. Amongst the roots recipients were: **Taima**, Aboriginal Recording (*Taima*); **Garrett Mason**: Blues Album (*I'm Just A Man*); **Oscar Lopez**: Instrumentalist of the Year (*My Destiny*); **Jenny Whiteley**: Roots and Traditional Solo (*Hopetown*); **The Wailin' Jennys** Roots and Traditional Group (*40 Days*); **Various Artists**: World Music Album (*African Guitar Summit*).



The 26th Annual W.C. Handy Awards were held in Memphis, TN, in May. The winners included: Blues Entertainer of the Year: **B.B. King**; Blues Band of the Year: **The Holmes Brothers**; Blues Album of the Year: **Mavis Staples**, *Have a Little Faith*; Contemporary Blues Male Artist of the Year: **Charlie Musselwhite**; Contemporary Blues Female Artist of the Year: **Shemekia Copeland**; Traditional Blues Male Artist of the Year: **Pinetop Perkins**; Traditional Blues Female Artist of the Year: **Koko Taylor**; Acoustic Blues Artist of the

Year: **David "Honeyboy" Edwards**



Norman Byron (Dutch) Mason, will receive the Order of Canada, June 10, from her Excellency the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada, June 10 at Rideau Hall in Ottawa. Mason receives his award for decades of promoting and playing the blues. **B.B. King** once called him the Prime Minister of the blues. The Order of Canada was established in 1967 to recognize outstanding achievement and service in various fields of human endeavour. Appointments are made on the recommendation of an advisory council, chaired by the Chief Justice of Canada. Mason is an original inductee into the Canadian Jazz and Blues Hall of Fame in 2004.

Born in Lunenburg, NS, 19 Feb 1938, and raised in Kentville, NS, he was introduced to the blues through the recordings of B.B. King, who would remain an important influence. Mason performed in Toronto as early as 1959, but has based his career in Nova Scotia. He lived a hard life while criss-crossing the country to play at bars and clubs from Nova Scotia to B.C. Now a senior citizen, he is crippled with arthritis so badly he can't hold his guitar anymore. And he has to use a wheelchair to get around. His 22-year-old son Garrett, Mason just earned a Juno for Best Blues Album of the Year (*I'm Just A Man*)



49 Greek St, Soho, London, England, original home of legendary sixties music club **Les Cousins**, is to host an art exhibition of interest to folk fans, reports BBC Radio. Appropriately titled 'Cousins' the exhibition is launched on June 1 and includes photographs primarily by **Robert Ellis**, **Brian Shuel** and **Julian Lloyd**. The permanent part of the exhibition shows pictures of the venue in 1967 and features rare images of **Bert Jansch**, **Al Stewart**, **Anne Briggs**, **Dave Graham**, **Martin Carthy**, **Alex Korner**, **Paul Simon**, and **Nick Drake**.



I am a DJ—I am what I play

Holger Petersen hosts two seminal Canadian radio blues programs. His *Natch'l Blues*, now in its 35th year on CKUA, is the longest running blues show in the country. It features the best music of the genre plus interviews with some of its greatest names. On Saturday Night Blues each week on national CBC Radio One, he mixes classic blues from the 'Petersen Vaults', concerts, interviews, artist features, new releases, plus anything that grooves, boogies, jumps, or swings. Saturday Night Blues has been on the air for 18 years and includes interviews, in-studio sessions, or live pickups from various Canadian festivals or concerts. The first hour each week features a Canadian blues and roots music artist. Petersen also plays 'Bluesline' requests, the 'Cover Of The Week' and gives an annual 'Great Canadian Blues' award for lifetime achievement voted on by listeners.



Holger Petersen

Natch'l Blues can be heard throughout Canada on CKUA Radio, Saturdays 3 - 5 pm, MST, throughout Alberta or at www.ckua.ca. Saturday Night Blues runs 11 pm to 1 am Saturday nights on CBC Radio One or online at cbc.ca.

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Cyril Tawney: 1930-2005

Ken Hunt writes, one of England's most important folk revival performers, songwriters, broadcasters and naval historians, Cyril Tawney died on 21 April of a mycobacterial infection and other complications. Born into a seafaring family on 12 October 1930 in the naval town of Gosport, he joined the Royal Navy at 16. By 1950 he was writing some of the most enduring songs ever written in England. Cyril was part of that first wave of English songmakers that revolutionised the British folk scene. His songs included *Five-Foot Flirt*, *The Ballad of Sammy's Bar*, *Sally Free And Easy*, *The Grey Funnel Line* and were covered by the likes of Martin Simpson and the Silly Sisters (Maddy Prior and June Tabor).

Tawney made his radio debut as a folk singer on the BBC Home Service's Sing Christmas and The Turn of the Year broadcast, live on Christmas Day 1957. Two years later, he bought himself out of the service to pursue a full-time, professional career as a folk singer. Initially he made his living by radio and television broadcasting, since these were days before the folk club explosion of the early 1960s. Within a year he was a 'recording artiste', having contributed to two HMV 10-inch albums, *Rocket Along* and *A Pinch of Salt* (both 1960). The following year he secured his first solo folk club date in Southampton. Over the following years he produced a variety of material, the first under his name being *Baby Lie Easy* (1963), though he also contributed to important anthologies such as *Farewell Nancy* (1964), *Folksound Of Britain* (1965) and *A Cold Wind Blows* (1966).

However, not everything went well. He suffered a nervous breakdown and *The Outlandish Knight* (1969), one of Tawney's most ambitious projects, delving into the folk music of the West Country got mired in record company politics and bureaucracy. From 1988 until the end of his life, he stuck to releasing his own material on his own label – Neptune Tapes. Most releases had nautical themes, but *Down The Hatch* (1994) was as passionate a statement of grog as any ex-Navy man could desire, laced with humour.

Cyril was a marvellous raconteur and a great storyteller and those abilities came out in his songs. When Peter Bellamy put together his 'ballad-opera' *The Transports* (1977, reissued 2004), he typecast Tawney as the The Shantyman. Many things will be written about Cyril, but he was a true original. He made history come alive and brought the past into the present. He shaped the British Folk Revival with his humanity and artistry.

Dorris Henderson: 1929-2005

Dorris Henderson, when she arrived in colour-bar Britain in 1965, writes Ken Hunt, did not know a solitary soul, but she arrived with unholly creden-

tials and she established herself as a great singer in her own right. She was born Dorris Celia Hankerson in Florida on 2 February 1929 (most likely), but remained coy throughout about her exact year of birth. At her grave in Whitton in Middlesex she is Dorris Celia McGann, aged 76. She died on 3 March 2005 at Charing Cross Hospital in Hammersmith, London. She grew up in Los Angeles where she learned material from Alan Lomax songbooks and developed a name for herself on L.A. folk club circuit.

Down the line, she ran into his ducal hipness, Lord Buckley (actually Richard Myrtle Buckley (1906-60) with whom she promenaded and crooned *Rock of Ages* on a recording of *The Nazz* and *Kumbaya* on *The Black Cross*. She left a good civil service job in Los Angeles and moved to England, apparently more or less on whim. Within days of arriving in London, she was checking out London's folk scene. At the Troubadour in Earl's Court, a scenerie haunt that attracted poets, actors, folk and pop musicians, she met Gill Cook, the manager of Collet's folk shop on New Oxford Street. Cook established that she was indeed Buckley's 'Lady Dorris'. Hip credentials like nearness to Buckley were sure-fire bohemian credentials.

All sorts of work followed immediately. Non-white faces were rare on the British folk scene but she got where she got through talent, not tokenism. She gigged, appeared on television, slipped into Pennebaker's *Don't Look Back* documentary film about Dylan and began recording, most notably at this stage with John Renbourn whom she met at the Roundhouse in London's Wardour Street before his Pentangle days.

In 1965, she and Renbourn recorded *There You Go* for Columbia, reissued on Big Beat in 1999, closely followed by *Watch The Stars* for Fontana in 1966. She joined the folk-rock group Election, a group fronted by Trevor Lucas after the group's first female vocalist left, and appeared with them at the Isle of Wight Festival in 1969. A later incarnation of the group became Dorris Henderson's Election.

Later, she sang with a variety of London-based jazz groups including Bob Kerr's Jazz Friends and John Rodgers' House Band. In her last years, she returned to recording with the three-stars-out-of-five album *Here I Go Again* (2003) a mixture of traditional and original songs. Her funeral also became the launch of her album *Let It Shine*, credited to Dorris Henderson & The Cohorts, fronted by her husband Mac McGann.

George Scott 1929-2005

Ignoring talk about longevity and survival or pontificating about triumph over adversity and disability, the Blind Boys of Alabama rank as one of the greatest gospel groups of the last six decades. They elevated art and aesthetics to new heights, writes Ken Hunt. George Scott was born in

Notasulga, Alabama and on account of his blindness was sent away to be taught at the Alabama Institute for the Negro Blind. That congregation of words makes me tear over, having fought disability causes for decades. There he befriended two other lads called Clarence Fountain and Jimmy Carter, with whom he got together in 1939 as the Happy Land Jubilee Singers.

If you're blind, the wisdom goes, hearing compensates, just like deaf people are supposed to have a more finely tuned colour sense. After graduation in 1944, and expanded to a quintet, they were striving to make a living and launched themselves on the South as the jubilee-Blind Boys of Alabama. Singing gospel was no easy road.

It was only in 1983 when they featured in a Pentecostal retelling of the Oedipus tale, *The Gospel at Colonus* on Broadway that they achieved a breakthrough. They found a new voice, a new audience and a national and international following. Collaborations with Solomon Burke, Peter Gabriel, Ben Harper, the Houston Symphony Orchestra and Lou Reed followed, as did Grammy awards. Scott, who died on 9 March, retired from touring in 2004, but his baritone voice appears on *Atom Bomb* (2005).

George 'Wild Child' Butler 1936-2005

Blues harmonica journeyman, George 'Wild Child' Butler, died March 1, in hospital in Windsor, Ontario, from pulmonary embolism. He was 69, writes Roddy Campbell. His nickname came from his mother because of his antics as a kid, but by the age of 12 he had taught himself the rudiments of the blues harmonica. Born in Autaugaeville, Alabama, in 1936, Butler was gigging professionally as a band-leader by the late fifties. He cut his debut single *Achin' All Over* for the small Sharp label.

His recording career, however, didn't blossom until he moved to Chicago in 1966 and signed with Jewel Records. He cut a number of singles there using such sidemen as Willie Dixon (bass) and Jimmy Dawkins (guitar). Butler also worked for a while with Lightnin' Hopkins in Houston, Texas, and appeared on his late sixties recordings.

In 1969, the harpist released *Keep On Doing What You're Doing* for Mercury Records. It sank without a trace. *Funky Butt Lover* (1976) did not fare much better. His fortunes changed, however, when he moved to Windsor, in 1981, where his earlier albums were rereleased to critical acclaim. While he often toured with guitarist Jimmy Rogers in the eighties, Butler formed his own band and resumed his recording career with when he cut the first of two albums for British producer Mike Vernon. *These Mean Old Blues* was an engaging set of original material cut in London. *Stranger*, the fruits of another English session, emerged in 1994.



short cuts

The Rembetika Hipsters



Greek Urban Blues

The Rembetika Hipsters talk to Scott Lingley about a Turkish tyrant, exotic alphabets, and a tune or two.

Rembetika music was born in the urban slums and shanty towns of Greece following what Greeks refer to as 'the catastrophe' – the expulsion of some two million ethnic Greeks from the Anatolia region of Turkey. Allen Baekeland, guitarist and vocalist with Calgary's Rembetika Hipsters, says they don't call it the Greek urban blues for nothing.

"Kemal Ataturk basically drove the Greeks into the sea, so what happened was there was a huge exchange of population between Turkey and Greece around 1922-23," says Baekeland. "So these refugee communities set up shop in various cities and towns and their music was rembetika music, which was a combination of music they had brought over from Turkey with Greek music. The subject matter dealt with their living situation, poverty, love, going to jail, drug abuse – their everyday lives."

Baekeland says he was introduced to rembetika by bandmate Nick Diochnos.

Both vets of the rock/country scenes in Calgary and Toronto, they were looking for uncharted musical territory when they teamed up a decade ago to explore Diochnos' growing interest

in his cultural heritage.

"Nick asked me to play with him – and I'm always up for a challenge," Baekeland recalls. "We started out as a two-piece and I'm sure we were quite painless to listen to."

Diochnos and Baekeland recruited violinist Brigitte Dajczer and multi-instrumentalist Lincoln Frey and percussionist Ben Jonson to round out their troupe and have spent the last decade spreading the impassioned, sometimes boisterous sound of rembetika to audiences across North America and Europe. As their two studio albums attest, the Rembetika Hipsters have risen to the challenge of accommodating the exotic musical modes, time signatures and instrumentation – as well as the Greek alphabet – into their vocabulary.

Freshly returned from the Alberta Scene showcase in Ottawa and successful shows in Montreal, where violinist Dajczer makes her home, Baekeland says the Hipsters are poised for a busy year despite themselves. Along with festival gigs on the west coast and the prairies, he says the band hopes to start work on recording their follow-up to 2003's *Dinner in Polidroso*. While authenticity has always been a hallmark of the Hipsters' work, Baekeland says the varied backgrounds of the band members are sure to spice the pot with influences from western and world music.

"We're not trying to be a rembetika revival act," he says, "but you try to respect the music, if you can."

In talking with someone who lives out of a suitcase, it really makes you appreciate home and yearn for the road all at the same time.

Making Tracks

Phillip Harries catches up with roving minstrel Mike Plume.

Mike Plume, a Canadian alt-country singer-songwriter is a road worn warrior – fifteen years on the road. He has played over 3,000 shows, 250 in one year. To hell with the Atkins Diet, Mike's cure for 'weight loss was traveling by day, playing three-hour shows by night, and sucking back two packs of smokes a day'.

Lunching with Mike in an Edmonton pub on a warm February afternoon and listening to him talk and joke, I got a real sense that this troubadour really enjoys being a roving minstrel. "Maybe that's why I like writing music to drive to – it's the travelling, the places and the people that interest me."

Mike and his wife, Jen and eight month old daughter now call Toronto home, but before that he spent five years in Tennessee and a year in Texas. While in Nashville he joked to himself that he should find an American woman to marry for a 'green card'. And, into his life journeys Jenny Orenstein, a Canadian singer-songwriter with dual citizenship, and two years ago, on a bit of a lark returned to Canada with Jen. Are there any more moves in Mike's fu-

ture, he shrugs his shoulders and laughs, "Who knows? We could move back to Nashville or live in New York, Copenhagen, England or Ireland. We could move anywhere and be happy!"

So, what's down the road for Mike Plume? A new CD due out in the fall with a new band – name still pending, but Mike is leaning towards "Mike Plume and the Future Hall of Famers" or "Mike Plume and the Rambling Boys of Pleasure".

Bow Ties

Former Paperboy fiddler, Shona Le Mottée, talks to Tony Montague about her rather good solo debut disc

What's in a name? In the case of fiddler Shona Le Mottée's debut disc *Destination Grouville*, a meaningful pun. Grouville is the community where her she was brought up – and where her dad lives – on Jersey, one of the Channel Islands off the coast of north-west France. And "Grooveville" (her pronunciation) encapsulates Le Mottée's contemporary Celtic sound and live show – musically savvy and sassy.

Le Mottée is 11 years old, and already fiddling when she moved to Vancouver. Part of every summer was spent at the Valley of the Moon fiddle camp in northern California, where she learned to play from the likes of Cape Breton ace Buddy MacMaster and Scottish wizard of the bow Alastair Fraser. The mighty



Mike Plume



Jerry Holland from Cape Breton figured too, and *Just Cruising*, the opening tune on *Destination Grouville's* title cut, is one of his compositions, performed with swagger by Le Mottée.

"The style I play is really a cross between Scottish and Cape Breton due to the people I learned from at Valley of the Moon" says Le Mottée. "Since I was in my late teens I've been writing, though that's not something I've done consistently. There are several pieces by me on the album, but it's been sporadic. *Red Gloves* was written five years ago for my sister's wedding."

When 22 Le Mottée joined the Paperboys and recorded the Juno-winning album *Molinos* with the West Coast Celtic band. Later she was lured to Las Vegas and Florida to play fiddle in the Lord of the Dance extravaganza. Le Mottée came back from the glitz to start working on her solo album, with Tim Readman as producer. He also cowrites the three songs on

Destination Grouville, and contributes guitar and vocals. "We met while I was working with the Paperboys and he was in Fear of Drinking. It was really easy and natural to work together. We also play as a duo, and there's a full band with Boris Favre on bass, Allan Dionne on drums, Paul Lawton on percussion, and Keona Munday on whistle and flute, who all play on the album. It's a big sound."

The Grouville bus is an express.

Northern Lights

Caribou Records celebrates its 10th anniversary. Tony Montague talks to founder David Petkovich

Southern Canadian folkies should prepare for a sonic invasion this fall by a herd of artists from the Yukon. Whitehorse-based label Caribou Records is celebrating ten years in the trade, with a rolling, cross-country mini-festival of musicians from its roster.

The campaign will be unconventional, according to Caribou co-founder David Petkovich: "Sometimes the musicians will be playing at the same venue, or maybe not. We'd move right across the country, west to east, gathering as much attention for the performers and for the label as we can."

Caribou was created by Petkovich and Bob Hamilton in 1995 with a mandate to support the Yukon-based music scene

and its artists, who had few means of reaching out to the rest of Canada. "We put out a compilation CD called *Yukon Collection, Volume 1*, with six different artists on it, and it did really well. That was the catalyst to keep going, and produce solo albums for some of the artists who were on the original collection."

Petkovich and Hamilton soon found that they wanted to extend Caribou's reach to include out-of-province artists. "If we were to become a national label we needed to start working with people outside of the Yukon – even though we'd prioritize local artists," says Petkovich. "We don't want to limit ourselves." In 2000 Caribou released the excellent *Son de Cuba*, an album of dance music from the band Valle Son, who came to Whitehorse from their home in Pinar del Rio to make the recording.

When bluegrass band Hungry Hill and singer-songwriters Kim Barlow, Kim Beggs, Anne Louise Genest, and Indio Saravanza make their foray south and east this fall, Petkovich hopes to have Valle Son invading from the other direction as part of the Caribou master-plan. "In some places the artists might split off and go in different directions for a week, and then regroup again. It's not defined yet."

There's no defence available against a little label that can bring together artists from the tropics and the arctic to fete its first decade.

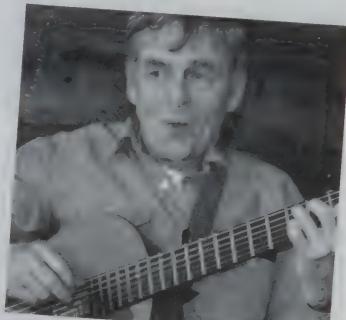
The Mitchell Man

Paul-Émile Comeau catches up with Joni's ex, Chuck Mitchell.

Unlike his young wife, who quickly rose to stardom after taking his surname, Chuck Mitchell always remained on the edges of the music industry, even though his own recording career was launched auspiciously enough shortly after he and Joni divorced. It was unusual enough to release an album on a small label in the late 60s but *Dreams & Stories*. Mitchell's debut, even featured an all-star cast of session musicians (Red Rhodes, Milt Holland, John Guerin, etc.). As the singer recalls, "For some reason the label (Happy

Tiger) decided to drop me after spending \$75,000 on my production! I ended up buying the masters for a tenth of that and paid for the expensive artwork and poster insert with my share of royalties from a publishing venture with Joni."

Chuck Mitchell didn't release another album until *Combinations* in 1976, soon to be reissued on CD. The album, which combines songs and poetry, remains a reasonably good representation of his current performances. Although Mitchell's profile has always been low-key he never really quit music. "I made my living entirely as an entertainer from 1965 until 1988," he declares. "I never got a recording contract. I didn't fit in and I never tried to. I hung out in L.A. and worked



Chuck Mitchell

clubs. Unfortunately, my cabaret show of Brecht/Weill and Flanders/Swann-type material didn't really attract attention in L.A. I couldn't really afford to stay there so I moved to Iowa."

After moving to Keokuk (Iowa) Mitchell teamed up with David Marion in 1990 for a Mr. Foster & Mr. Twain show, with Mitchell in the role of Stephen Foster. "My current repertoire is still based on what I've developed over the last 40 years or so – early ballads, some songs by Fred Eaglesmith, Cheryl Wheeler and, of course, some of my own songs." He also effectively blends in Joni's *The Circle Game* into a longer piece. Asked about his plans for the future he replies with a tinge of irony, "I'm in this for the long haul... but I'm still waiting for the right offer."



David Petkovich

Win a copy of Joni Mitchell's Songs Of A Prairie Girl

Joni Mitchell was born in Fort McLeod, Alberta, and later moved to Saskatoon with her parents. She grew up there before leaving for Calgary and the College of Art. Clearly, then, the Prairie's played an important role in shaping her character in her formative years. She, of course, later moved to Toronto, Detroit and New York before becoming one of the most celebrated songwriters of her era. Thanks to the wonderful generosity of Warner Bros Canada, we have six copies of *Songs of a Prairie Girl* to give away. To win one answer the following questions correctly and e-mail your answers to penguinegs1@shaw.ca. Please provide a mailing address so we can post on your prize.

- Q 1: Which stringed instrument did she learn to play in Calgary?
- Q 2: Joni performed once in concert in Canada in 1994. Name the event?
- Q 3: k.d. lang, a prairie girl too, recently covered one of Joni's songs. Which one?

JONI MITCHELL



Answers to the Maria Dunn, *We Were Good People* contest are – Q1: The Barely Awake Roots Show Q2: *For A Song*. Q3: Orphan Hand. The winners are John Thompson, Langley, BC; Margaret O'Neil, Hamilton, ON; June Harrison, Spruce Grove, AB; Megan Bryant, Sherwood Park, AB; Sandra Logan, Edmonton, AB; Russ Conway, Guelph, ON.

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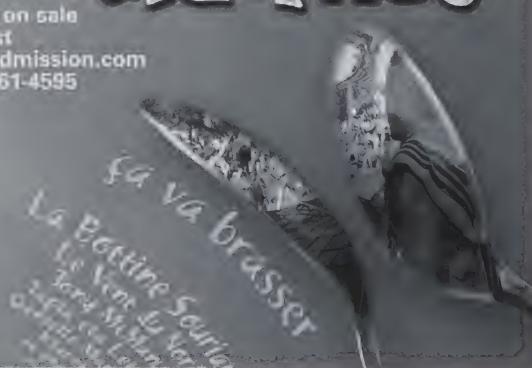
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Stax Appeal

Mali's Amadou & Mariam collaborate with Spanish sprite Manu Chao on their fourth release, *Dimanche A Bamako*. It's a non-stop joyful masterpiece, reckons our Chris Nickson.

Successful partnerships that mix marriages and music have been few and far between. But Mali's Amadou and Mariam are the exception that proves the rule. It's been more than a quarter of a century since a young guitarist named Amadou Bagayoko met singer Mariam Doumbia at the Mali Institute for Blind Youth and the pair fell in love. Now, with their fourth album, *Dimanche A Bamako*, they're celebrating their silver anniversary – an achievement for any marriage in these times.

"It's partly about love, about being together, about marriage," Amadou explains, "especially on *M'Bifé*." That's a song that appears in three different guises, closing the record with the words, "Darling, I'll love you until I die."

"We wanted to express our love for each other honestly and simply, the way people do. And we're very happy together."

The sentiments all clothed in the bluesy, soulful sound that's been Amadou and Mariam's trademark, sounding as if they'd fallen through the rabbit hole from West Africa to the glory days of Memphis, putting the fun in funky.

This time, however, there's a delightful, twisted quirkiness to the album, thanks to the production – and playing – of Spanish-based world music sprite Manu Chao. The former Mano Negra leader, who's forged quite an acclaimed solo career in recent years, first heard the duo on a car radio.

"He heard *Chaufeurs*, a track from our last album, *Wati*, says Amadou, "and liked it." Since the couple now lives in France, meeting up was easy, and he offered to produce their new disc.

Chao's globalista stance is immediately evident in snippets of conversation and sirens that bring Mali's capital, Bamako, sharply to life. He also appears on three tracks, including *Sénégal Fast Food*, where the impish reggae rhythm bounces around in true Chao style over Amadou's bluesy guitar, all topped with some very political lyrics – another Chao trait. But, Amadou insists, the producer wasn't putting words in their mouths, as "we feel these things, too, very strongly. We just said them all together."

It's overt, condemning stances that demand "blood, tears, ignorance, lies, lives..." and on *La Réalité*, the way so many leaders see the world "in black and white," as Amadou puts it. What the songs look for, he says, is common ground and peace, where there can be "unity and solidarity be-



Amadou & Miriam

tween "Maliens, Ivoirians, Burkinese, Mauritanians, Senegalese, Guinean, Ghanaians." But the words and sweetened by the music, so that in their own way, these political pieces are as much love songs as songs about the heart.

Working with his wife isn't Amadou's only musical experience. His career stretches back almost three decades, starting out with Les Ambassadeurs, one of West Africa's legendary outfits, which once boasted the great Salif Keita as their singer.

"We were in the Côte d'Ivoire," he recalls, "and the musicians were from all over, from Senegal, Mali, everywhere. We came together, played regularly, and made records. It was a wonderful time, and the music was great, as long as it lasted."

He remained with Les Ambassadeurs for six years, serving the kind of apprenticeship most guitar players would give their eye teeth for. But it was after that, with his wife, that Amadou found his true voice. She complemented his style with her grounding in more traditional Malian music, and together they found they had something special, not only romantically, but also musically.

After spending much of the '80s in Abidjan, in the Côte d'Ivoire releasing cassettes, the couple moved to France, where their CDs found a receptive audience, the spare music filled out with horns that sounded like they were on an African vacation from the old Stax studios. They toured all over, and kept building their fan base.

It was 2002's *Wati* that took them to the next level, the culmination of all that had gone before, with excellent, catchy songs and emotive performances – soul music for a generation that had never known the real thing. It created a buzz among au-

diences that left them eager for the next album.

Dimanche A Bamako builds on that, but also travels in a slightly new direction. The horns are virtually gone, and the sound is firmly guitar-based, from the African funk of *Coulibaly* to *Artistiya*, which seems almost like an update of the Wassoulou sound, with Mariam's delicate voice floating over a raging riff. Then there's the intensity of *Camions Sauvages* – out of place, perhaps, but irresistible, followed by the stripped-down *Beaux Dimanches* the gentle *Politie Amagni* before finishing up with the declaration of "Je T'Aime Jusqu'à La Mort."

There seems to be little doubt that, after years of paying their dues, this record seems destined to propel them into the premier leagues of world music. It's a non-stop masterpiece, careening from track to track, open, warm, and inviting – and certain to end up on a lot of best-of lists for 2005. For sheer joy, and a touch of l'amour, few will come close this year.

It's already caused a stir in France and other countries on the continent, according to Amadou, who says that "the reviews have been very good. People seem to like this mix of what we do with what Manu Chao has brought, and that's very gratifying to us all. It's something new, but we think it works."

Amadou & Mariam will be touring extensively behind *Dimanche A Bamako*. They've already completed one European trek, and the summer will see them making a foray to North America – their first visit here in years. An American tour has been planned, and among the dates in Canada, they'll be at the Edmonton Folk Festival, a gig they're relishing.

"We've heard a lot about Edmonton. Everyone tells me it's great."



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The Sounds of Silence

*The Yukon turned Kim Beggs into a songwriter. And a rather good one, too, as her masterful debut disc, *Streetcar Heart*, will confirm. She's also quite a stunning singer, reports Roddy Campbell*

Kim Beggs sits in Second Cup on busy Whyte Avenue with her herbal tea and translucent thoughts as I moan about the weather. Surely there are more hospitable places on the good planet earth than Edmonton at the arse-end of February.

Beggs looks bemused. She, after all, lives in the Yukon – in the pines, in the pines, where the sun never shines. Well, at least not throughout December or January. Eleven years all told she has spent living in and around Whitehorse, often on her own in backwoods cabins without running water or electricity while working as a carpenter.

Such solitude had its compensations, though. Distractions, oddly enough, proved limited, which left hours and hours for drawing, sculpting and other latent inclinations.

"When I made up my mind to go to the Yukon I decided to get myself a guitar. So I went to a pawn shop in Vancouver and bought one for a \$100," says Beggs. "I really wanted to learn it. It wasn't so much I wanted to learn the guitar, I think I wanted to sing songs that I really liked because it's fun. So as a tool to sing, that's what I did. I think living in the Yukon brought out the songwriter in me. I wasn't writing before that."

It actually took four guitars – two stolen, a third lost in a fire and a fourth donated – before she completed her debut disc, *Streetcar Heart*. And it's an altogether faithful introduction to a wonderfully unique and engaging singer. Victoria Williams without the daft excesses makes a handy reference point. But there's a sweetness and alluring innocence in Beggs' voice that transcends comparisons.

So Ms. Beggs, pray tell, how did you develop such a distinctive style of singing?

"I have no idea. I started off really quiet. You could hardly hear me. It's probably evolved over the last few years, for sure. But one thing, I feel inspired by somebody's vocals when they really go deep inside themselves to express what they are trying to say. It makes me go, 'I wonder if I can go further into myself? Am I sincere enough in my expression?' I think how I sing a song is a really big part of the creative process – all the time spaces between words, how you draw words out. Yeah."

Produced with a minimum of fuss by former Undertakin' Daddy, Bob Hamilton, *Streetcar Heart* resounds with little more than the odd ornamentation of tasteful fiddle, dobro and accordion. While largely confessional, humorous tracks such as *Her Big Yellow Backhoe*, *Giddyup Cowboy*, *Bucko* and *I Carry My Guitar (Like A Load of Lumber)*, offers a sense of fun sadly lacking amongst the majority of terminally introverted singer-songwriters. Not that *Streetcar Heart* lacks poignancy. Somebody really ought to send the beautifully moving *Petals* to Emmylou Harris.

"I know a lot of people who have been really af-



Kim Beggs

fected by terrible experiences. In *Petals*, I think it is pretty obvious that it is about sexual abuse. But it could be about anything. I like to write metaphorically because I feel that anybody could take it as whatever their life trauma is. What that song is about is people looking within themselves to overlook what takes them down. Sometimes it takes a long time, maybe people never overcome it, but I hope they do. So it's a song of hope."

While born in Val d'Or Quebec, Beggs' father was a mining engineer and she grew up in various towns across northern Ontario and the Yukon before settling in Toronto. After a halfhearted attempt at a degree in social work at the University of Guelph, she left Ontario to visit her sister in the Yukon in the summer of 1991 and moved there permanently that winter. To support herself, she served an apprenticeship as a carpenter.

"I was raised to be very independent: 'If you don't know how to do it look it up or figure it out. Nobody is going to tell you. You have to do it on your own.'"

Kim Beggs' musical abilities evolved slowly, though. First, she had to overcome an ingrained fear of performing in public. In 2000, an activist friend invited her to perform for the Whitehorse AIDS Walk. Despite a fit of nerves, she reveled in the response she received from the audience. Open mic sessions at the local Backwater Lounge also proved a pivotal platform for her to practice her stagecraft.

"That's where I got my start. That's where a lot of musicians I know got their start. I was going out and supporting my friends getting up at the open mic. I didn't have any desire to do it myself but then I started to think this fear of crowds and being in front of people was a bit of an obstacle in my life and I wanted to conquer it so I started to get up and play. And it was very shortly after that I started to write. I just felt that I had things to say."

Her aspirations received an unexpected boost when asked to open for the Undertakin' Daddies at

a gig organized by the former Whitehorse arts magazine, *Out of Service*. The Daddies' Bob Hamilton, part owner of Caribou Records, was immediately impressed by her songwriting. Beggs subsequently applied for a grant to make a demo and Hamilton agreed to produce it when the money arrived.

"I wanted to see how the experience would be. If it was going to be a terrible experience in the studio then maybe I didn't want to pursue a recording career. But it was very positive. I had a really good time and worked really well with Bob. I felt like I could really be my whole weird self. So we got it done."

That session led to the aptly-titled EP, *Beautiful* – a disc that earned her a prestigious showcase at the Ontario Council of Folk Festivals in Sudbury. That night the managing editor of Penguin Eggs came rushing out of the venue demanding: "Get that woman's CD! She was really, really good!" Startled, I left a drink in the hands of Carolyn Mark, never a wise thing to do, and ran after Beggs.

That disc, indeed, offered so much promise. And late last winter it all came to fruition with the release of *Streetcar Heart*. Yet strangely enough, Beggs remains earnestly nonchalant about the whole turn of events that has her on the brink of serious national recognition within the folk community.

"My ultimate goal is to be happy," she says. "I think about working [as a carpenter] and making real money because I still have bills to pay. If I don't pay them I'll be in real trouble and I won't be able to do music. I have enjoyed it, touring and meeting people. But not all the pieces are in place yet. I need to find an agent. I need people to represent me so that I don't have to spend 100 percent of my time, working out the details of booking a tour. We'll see what happens. I'm pretty patient. I'd like somebody to come along who really believes in me and in the music."



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Bringing it all Back Home

As traditional music in Quebec goes from strength to strength, its festivals follow suit. Dispatches on three of the best, Le Carrefour Mondial de l'Accordéon in Montmagny, La Grande Rencontre in Montreal, and Mémoire et Racines, by Tony Montague.

The current boom in homegrown roots music in Quebec has its origins in the lean years of the '80s, when the Francophone media dubbed folk hopelessly passé. Traditional music was linked with the old-guard nationalists, and the new generation, with few exceptions, showed little interest in the fiddle tunes, clogging, and chansons à réponse de their parents and grandparents.

Many artists who had emerged during the great revival of the '70s had to earn their bread by other means. Home gigs were few and small in the main, and there were virtually no festivals. The bands that managed to survive through this tough period, such as La Bottine Souriante or Eritage, were sustained to a large degree by the circuit of folk gatherings, concerts, and coffee houses of English-speaking Canada and the U.S.

These artists came home with fresh ideas about how the music and culture they loved could be presented, and promoted in their own province. The end result of a lot of meetings, funding drives, and grant letters is a folk infrastructure and string of high-calibre festivals that have their own distinctive flavour but which follow a similar formula to their west Canadian counterparts in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver.

Le Carrefour Mondial de l'Accordéon in Montmagny, La Grande Rencontre in Montreal, and Mémoire et Racines – the three leading summer folk festivals in Quebec – provide overdue recognition of the province's wealth of trad music and musicians, act as springboards for the creation and growth of new bands such as La Voie d'Castors, Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer, and Matap, and invite artists from traditions other than those of French-speaking North America.

The Carrefour Mondial de l'Accordéon [World Accordion Crossroads], created in 1989, was the first of these events and remains the largest, attracting some 45,000 people over 5 days in early September. It takes place in the attractive little town of Montmagny, on the south bank of the St Lawrence, 50 kms downstream from Quebec City, and the focus is obviously on the accordion and the family of free-reed instruments.

"We showcase the accordion in all its forms – diatonic or chromatic, concertina, or bandoneon," says Raynald Ouellet, the Carrefour's artistic director and an excellent box-player himself. "And of course the repertoires of all the countries where these instruments are found in popular culture. The idea is to put traditional players on the same level as artists in jazz, tango, or classical music. Our venues are spread throughout the town - there are two free open-air daytime stages, as well as four or five halls for the ticketed evening-concerts."

The attraction of Montmagny for accordionists



predates the festival. The celebrated diatonic accordian-maker Marcel Messervier, who opened his workshop there several decades ago, is still going strong, and the surrounding region remains rich in traditional players. Now, in addition to the annual Carrefour there's an accordion museum.

One of the Carrefour's co-founders with Ouellet is Benoit Bourque – accordianist, clogger, caller, and bone-rattler with Le Vent du Nord. The two musicians were members of Eritage, and through their travels with the band they'd come to understand what makes a folk festival tick – a great site, a strong home-base with legions of volunteers, and an open-attitude to music and musicians.

"It's worked incredibly well," says the genial Bourque, one of the great animateurs in every sense of Quebecois music. "We could never have imagined it would get so big, but it's still really friendly and accessible. I go back every year, most often as m.c. I also do some jigging and rattle the bones but I don't play much accordion. I prefer to present and accompany all the great players around."

The Carrefour – which runs September 1-5 this year – includes a lecture series with topics ranging from Bulgarian music to the Bal Musette, as well as music camps in the week prior to the festival. "The camps are new," says Ouellet. "We'll be teaching diatonic accordion, Quebecois style, plus there will be artists from Poitou [the region of western France from which many of the settlers came to Quebec] who'll be teaching their music."

Workshops and classes have always been an element of La Grande Rencontre, Montreal's premier traditional festival. It was founded in 1992 by movers and shakers from the staidly-named Société pour la Promotion de la Dance Traditionnelle Québécoise, and features a concert series, dances, and a music school. They're all focused on the arts of the veillée, a word that translates best as ceiliadh – not just a dance but an

evening of homegrown entertainment: songs, storytelling, and lashings of Quelique joie de vivre.

La Grande Rencontre's artistic director, Gilles Garand, is also one of its founders. He's excited that for its 14th edition the festival is moving to a superb new site - Parc Lafontaine - and will be held at a new time of year, late August. "La Grande Rencontre used to be in June, at the end of the cultural season," says the garrulous Garand. "But now it will provide the launch for what's to come in the fall and winter."

The festival's largest stage will be the Theatre de Verdure, an open-air auditorium in the heart of Montreal's most European-feeling green space, with its planted alleys of trees and broad walks. For Garand, the Parc Lafontaine is a site of historical and personal significance. "It's where I received my cultural baptism 30 years ago. There was an extraordinary veillée – called La Veillée des Veillées – celebrating the links between Quebec, Acadia, and Louisiana with musicians like Jean Carignan and Gilles Losier."

The music of these homegrown old masters shook Garand to his cultural roots. He dedicated himself to promoting folk culture – dance as well as music. But while Quebecois traditions are at the core of La Grande Rencontre [The Big Get-together], the festival is open to other sounds and genres.

Every year there's a special theme. In 2004 it was Scottish music and its influence. For this year's Grande Rencontre, which runs for five days August 24-28, it's an instrument: the harmonica. On the Saturday night the Auditorium du Plateau will host Le Sommet de l'Harmonica [The Harmonica Summit], with half a dozen of Canada's premier harpers – Alain Lamontagne, Gerald Laroche, Mike Stevens, Keith Bennett, Don Kavanagh and Gabriel Labbé.

La Grande Rencontre always has a concert series and a dance series, and each of the traditional

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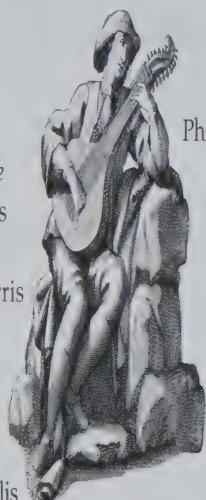
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groups invited normally plays one regular show and participates in one veillée. Among the performers this August are young Bob fiddler Laura Cortese, the brilliant young Quebecois traditional bands Genticorum, Réveillon, Les Chauffeurs à Pied [The Foot Chauffeurs], and a female a cappella group on the lines of Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer called Galant, Tu Perds Ton Temps [Loverboy, you're wasting your time]. There's also a new supergroup of veterans from the revival of the '70s, Le Trio à Quatre [The Four-man Trio], made up of Michel Bordeleau, Normand Miron, Bernard Simard, and Pierre Laporte.

Garand sees the festival as part of a self-sustaining cultural cycle, allowing traditional music to flourish in Canada's most cosmopolitan city. "La Grande Rencontre brought the school, the school brings in 150 students every week. It's a like a wheel that keeps turning. People are taking back their own culture and coming to the veillées we put on throughout the year – where we regularly get up to 300 people, the majority of them under 35. There's a real generational solidarity there, and it's everywhere at the festival."

That same ability to span the generations is a hallmark of Mémoire et Racines, youngest of the festivals but with the deepest community roots. The three-day event takes place in a lovely park by a river on the outskirts of Joliette (some 60 kms north of Montreal) on the last weekend in July. The town is the largest in the region of Lanaudière, one of the most fertile grounds in all of North America for traditional culture - a uniquely Canadian melting pot of Acadian families expelled in 1755 from their Atlantic homeland, Quebecois habitants, and Irish and Scottish soldiers from Wolfe's army.

With much intercultural frolicking came such Lanaudière bands as La Bottine Souriante, La Volée d'Castors, Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer. Mémoire et Racines festival, founded in 1995, to bring it all back home, and at the same time open up new perspectives.

"It quickly became a three day event with artists from all over Quebec and also from elsewhere in Canada, Europe too," says Gilles Pître, the festival's director general. "In our first year we had a group from Denmark, and this year we have Basque and Breton musicians coming, as well as a klezmer band from Montreal, Kleztory. There's always a strong Celtic component and, as well as the Bretons, we've got [ace Scottish guitarist] Tony McManus performing."

Naturally those musicians referred to by the festival as "carriers of the tradition" - the old-timers who are still playing – are represented at every edition of Mémoire et Racines, which runs July 29-31, this year. "We have two great accordionists coming, Roland Aumont and Jacques Laroche. There are jam sessions where they play along with musicians still in their teens. The six daytime stages are all acoustic, which keeps things simple and intimate. It's one of the most distinctive and popular aspects of the festival. We also have an important story-telling component – last year we invited Michel Faubert [from Les Charbonniers], and he's our m.c. in 2005."

The music for the main-stage concerts is, of course, amplified. But the scale remains pleasantly small - Pître anticipates attendance figures for the whole festival at somewhere between 5 000 and 7000. Quebec's contemporary trad music is of course the leading attraction – with performances by La Bottine, Le Vent du Nord, Galant Tu Perds Ton Temps.

The presence of the young band Belzébuth is an indication of the health of the present scene in Quebec, and of Mémoire et Racines in particular. "They're kids who started coming to the festival when they were 12-14 years old," says Pître. "Now they're 18-20, and on the trail of La Volée d'Castors, who were on the trail of La Bottine. It's really exciting to see – and hear – the music renewing itself, and growing all the time." □

Squeeze Play

He's a busy man that Ian Robb. A multi talented one too. Bob Dylan nicked Robb's arrangements from his previous traditional recordings. And now he has released Jig – a wonderful new collection of trad' arranged Robb – for Dylan to plunder. Patrick Langston supplies the details.

Virtual morris dancing: an arcane art, it boasts few practitioners. But among them is Ottawa's Ian Robb, better known for his devotion to traditional Anglo-Celtic folk songs. "Most of us are getting on in years and we can't dance all the time, otherwise we end up hurting ourselves. So we practice virtually by e-mail," says 57-year-old Robb, a member of Thames Valley International, a leading North American morris dance organization.

"We're all experienced dancers, so most of the e-mails concern little details of a particular dance or maybe someone has written a new dance and they want to discuss it."

Those hot and heavy practices, he adds, do result in public performances including an annual Easter Sunday event in New York's Central Park. Morris dancing, though, even the virtual variety, barely scratches the surface of Robb's daunting musical schedule. For starters, he's recently released his fifth solo album, *Jig*, on his own Fallen Angle label. A splendid collection of traditional and other tunes, the CD promptly zipped up to number nine on the FOLKDJ-L airplay chart, which polls some 150 mostly U.S. folk radio hosts. The album's lead-off track, *Chicken on a Raft*, garnered more airplay by those DJs in March than any other song.

Robb also performs regularly as part of the vocal harmony trio Finest Kind, stalwarts on the Canadian folk festival circuit and much admired in the northeastern U.S. As well, in the early 1970s Robb founded Toronto's Friends of Fiddler's Green, a traditional group which is still going strong. He plays for contra dances with Ottawa's Old Sod Band, and somewhere along the line, established the Old Sod Folk Music Society of Ottawa.

A member of Jig, an Ottawa quartet whose repertoire includes Quebec, Ontario, Appalachian and Irish material, Robb was also a regular columnist with Sing Out! magazine for years, served as Canadian vice-president of a musicians' union, sat on the board of . . . well, you get the picture.

Oh yeah, there was that thing with Dylan, too. But we'll get to that. Until retiring recently, Robb made his full-time living (don't even ask where he found the time for that) as an electron microscopist at Ottawa's Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

As for folk music, he stumbled, almost literally, into it. Robb, once a boy soprano with a Westminster Abbey choir, hit his teens thinking all folk music was American thanks to the pervasive influence of people like Joan Baez and Pete Seeger. Then one night, while on a pub crawl - "I think I was drinking age."

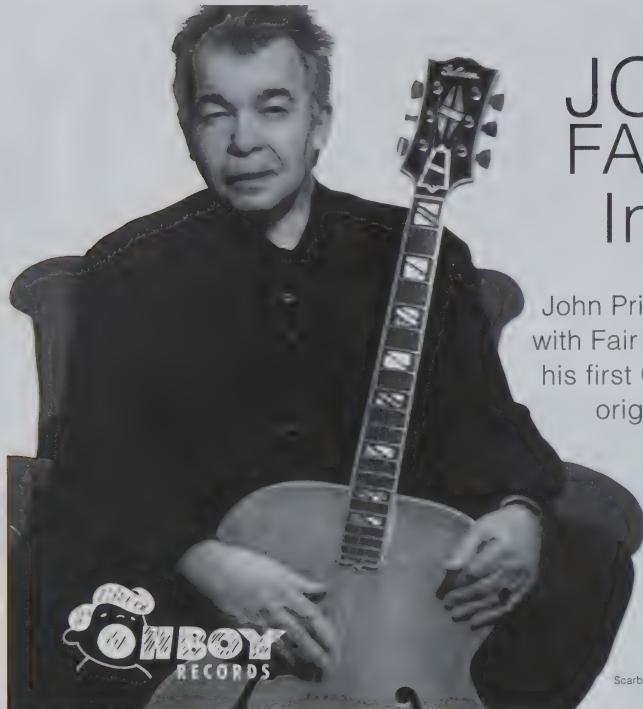
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laughs Robb - he wound up at The Goat Inn in Hertfordshire. On his way to the gents, Robb overheard music coming from a back room. It turned out to be Maddy Prior and Tim Hart. "I was so taken by the singing and the fact that this was English stuff they were singing that I stayed for the whole show."

Subsequent performances unveiled the talents of folks like Ewan MacColl and Martin Carthy to Robb, who had himself begun singing during the club's open mic sessions and eventually became its resident singer.

Robb abandoned London in 1970 for a research opportunity at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario (he never formally studied electron microscopy, just picked it up), and wound up resettling in Ottawa three years later.

Since then, he's added continuously to his musical repertoire, which, he points out, includes traditional Canadian and Australian songs performed "in an English style."

Inspired by the concertina playing of Louis Killen, Robb also took up the instrument himself in the 1970s. He's since become one of North America's leading interpreters of the concertina for song and dance accompaniment, and eight of the thirteen tracks on the new album - including MacColl's *Sweet Thames Flow Softly* - feature Robb's concertina.

The new album also includes a raft of musical helmsmates, from James Stephens, Greg T. Brown and Ian Clark of Jig (the band Jig, that is) accompanying Robb on most tracks and fellow Finest Kind members Shelley Posen and Ann Downey along with the Choir of St. James-in-the-Woods on *The Rose in June*.

Thanks especially to those Jig fellows, says Robb, "the album is more musically adventuresome than the other ones. The arrangements are very different, with a lot more rhythmic things going on."

While Robb wrote none of the tracks on Jig, he is a respected songsmith. His *The Old Rose and Crown* is a pub sing-a-long favorite (he says he's had reports of it being sung as far afield as Australia and Bali). *They're Taking It Away*, originally a decrying of social program slashes by the Mulroney government, is still sung at protests and Robb has written new verses to accord with various causes.

With all this activity, you wonder why Robb never jumped into music full time.

"The music I do is esoteric by most people's standards. What that means is that there's going to be small pockets of wildly enthusiastic support scattered all over the bloody world... you'd have to be on the road a whole lot and I have a wife and three daughters and that's one of the reasons I wouldn't want to get into that."

He also fears making music a job, he adds, and performing so much that it becomes onerous. Which, in a roundabout way, leads to Dylan, who never seems to tire of music, and Ian Robb.

Track eight on Jig is *The Female Rambling Sailor*, an Australian female warrior ballad which Robb recorded for Folk Legacy a couple of decades ago. Believing that the song lacked a half-verse, Robb wrote some extra lines before recording it. A few years later, someone sent Robb a bootleg concert tape of Dylan singing the song. Robb's lines were in

it. To top it off, Dylan sang another Australian-themed song, *Jim Jones*, on his 1992 album *Good as I Been to You*, a song which Robb had previously recorded.

"I made a few mistakes when I recorded that song and some of the mistakes are in Dylan's version. So either we think alike or else he's been listening to some of my stuff."

Ya Ya Brotherhood

Alpha Ya Ya Diallo grew up in multi-cultural West Africa, where he taught himself to play guitar by listening to griots. With stints in Bembuya Jazz and Fatala before moving to Canada in 1991, he has since won two Junos. Tony Montague lends an ear.

Multi-instrumentalist Alpha Yaya Diallo has reason to sound happy and relaxed these days. The CBC-produced album *African Guitar Summit*, to which he contributed three original tracks, won a Juno Award earlier this year; and *Djama*, the Vancouver-based Diallo's fifth solo release since moving to Canada from Guinea 12 years ago, is garnering strong reviews for its back-to-the-roots arrangements of original material and the superlative musicianship on display.

"The idea with *Djama (The People)*, was to use more indigenous African instruments than on my previous releases and while at the same time featuring my guitar-playing more prominently," says the laidback Diallo, interviewed in a café on Commercial Drive and speaking in French.

"I wanted to bring out traditional musical values and my own way of creating new compositions with them - not only the dominant Manding music of West Africa. I grew up a bit everywhere in that part of the world, and I heard a lot of different styles, soukous, makossa and others."

Diallo's father was a doctor who worked throughout Guinea - a country roughly the size of England,

and bordered by Senegal to the west, Mali to the north, and Ivory Coast to the east.

"I absorbed all the diverse cultural influences. I was about 11 or 12 when he set up house in Faranah in the region of the Malenké people, whose music is especially rich and strong. In the streets I often heard the playing of griots [a traditional caste of praise-singers and musicians], and decided I wanted to learn the guitar."

It was the '60s, and few of the instruments were yet to be found in Diallo's homeland, but his mother eventually managed to buy one. The guitar, which Diallo essentially taught himself to play, was not welcomed by all of the family. "There were many disputes between my parents over the music," he recalls. "My father was opposed to the guitar, fearing it would get in the way of my studies. He would take me aside and teach me to draw things like the digestive tract, the circulatory system or the brain - but as soon as I was free I would pick up my instrument to play. Sometimes I used to hide myself away in order to practice."

Diallo possesses a fine ear, and learned from the griots. As he travelled to Guinea's different regions he naturally picked up the languages and the musical traditions of its people. He began transposing the rhythmic and melodic patterns that he heard played on instruments such as the balafon (a wooden xylophone), the kora (a 21-string harp), and the ngoni (like the African offspring, and ancestor, of a lute and a banjo) - even imitating effects like the kora's shimmering arpeggios.

There were other influences as well on Diallo. "My mother had family in Senegal and I used to go there for holidays. Where I stayed there was a large community of people from Cape Verde, which only obtained its independence from Portugal in 1975. Their music had something of a flamenco feeling, as well



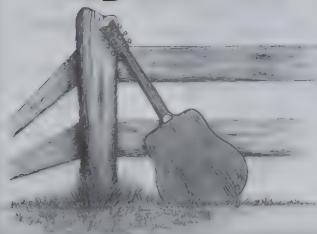
Alpha Ya Ya Diallo

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as a touch of Brazilian and Caribbean. I picked it all up very quickly."

During Diallo's formative years the socialist dictator and ruler of his homeland, Sékou Touré, provided many incentives for young musicians to develop distinctly Guinean sounds. Diallo was in great demand at school to accompany recitals and to play in different orchestras. Latin rhythms and instrumentation, brought over by sailors and Cubans, provided another major influence on his rapidly evolving musicianship. He learned to play electric guitar as well as percussion and drums, balafon and flute.

At university, Diallo studied plant genetics, but all of his spare time was taken up practising and performing with various bands he helped put together. He longed to be a musician, but options in Guinea were very limited by this time. "I even played with groups like Bembeya Jazz, Keletigui, the Cameroun Stars - but never full-time. I was just nibbling." After graduation a friend invited him to the Netherlands and Diallo soon found himself playing with renowned Real World recording artists Fatala.

Diallo left Fatala in 1991 to come and live in Canada, and within two years he released *Nene*, an acoustic album of original compositions, using traditional instruments. With the benefit of multi-tracking he ended up playing them all himself. The beautiful and intimate album, dedicated to his late mother, earned Diallo a Juno nomination. On the strength of its success he began assembling a band to play dance music with a more contemporary feel.

Both *Nene* and its follow-up *Futur*, gained Juno nominations for Best Global Album. The prize finally became Diallo's in 1999 with *The Message* and he won again in 2002 with *The Journey*, recordings that combine outstanding acoustic and electric musicianship and beautifully-crafted arrangements.

Two years ago Diallo was selected for the Canada Council-sponsored Sonic Wave tour which took six Canadian roots music bands and artists – among them Zubot and Dawson and Tanya Tagaq Gillis – to a string of leading European festivals.

This summer Diallo is back on the festival circuit at home. With his own band, comprising Naby Camara on balafon, and Karamba Diabate and Edward Suarez on percussion, he plays both Vancouver and Calgary jazz festivals and the Edmonton folk festival. And with the musicians of African Guitar Summit – notably guitarists Pa Joe, Adam Solomon, Mighty Popo, Donné Robert, and Madagascar Slim – Diallo appears at the Ottawa Blues Festival, and in Toronto at Afrofest and at the Harbourfront Centre, accompanied only by Camara. Diallo is excited by the new recognition given to African music in Canada, and inspired to refine his extraordinary blend of traditional and contemporary sounds.

"I never want to stray too far from my roots, while at the same time adding more Western influences. After all music must inevitably reflect the place where you live," Diallo points out. "The drummer can hold down a rhythm that is funky or jazzy or Latin, but the percussion and the guitar lines are completely African in flavour. It's that kind of mix and integration of elements that I'm trying to achieve. My musical heritage is very rich, very diverse; it's something I always want to preserve, and to keep building upon."



Les Gitans de Sarajevo

Heartbeats Accelerating

They have the heart and soul of Gypsies, Les Gitans de Sarajevo. Led by Goran Jezdimir and Boris Bartular, who both fled war-torn Yugoslavia for Quebec, they have developed into one of the most exhilarating roots bands in Canada. Mary Beth Carty has a quiet word.

I caught up with Goran Jezdimir, one of the founding members of Les Gitans de Sarajevo, on a typically calm weekday morning – calm before the storm, that is. He spends his afternoons teaching flute and soprano sax in two private Montreal music schools, and on this particular day, had to race off to a sound check after class. "We play almost every weekend!" says Goran, excitedly.

Since they started to perform live in 1998, the group has been extremely well received. "Believe me, at every show, the people dance, especially at the end. It's really something wonderful, for the public and for us too." Les Gitans are not self-absorbed – they truly care about their audience. The songs for their first disc, *En Voyage*, were chosen from their vast repertoire in a very democratic fashion. "Basically, we saw the reaction of the public. The songs that we chose for our CD are the songs the public chose."

Perhaps the most memorable show they ever had was playing at a private gala party for the owner of Cirque du Soleil during the Formula One Races in Montreal two or three years ago. "There were a lot of really famous people from all ends of the earth, a lot of Hollywood actors, and we were there! It was really unforgettable."

Born in Sarajevo in the former Yugoslavia, Goran studied at the Sarajevo's Academy of Classical Music. There he met Boris Bartula, the group's singer, accordionist, and piano player. In Sarajevo and in France they studied music together and had a little band that played various styles of music.

They might still be in Sarajevo playing music to-

day if it had not been for the bloody civil war that began in the early nineties. Goran left Sarajevo in 1995 with his wife and two children to come to Canada. "I could have chosen Australia or the United States, but Canada, especially Quebec, is very much like Europe. Also, Montreal is a city with a lot of different cultures, and I feel here like I did in my native city."

Little did Goran know that Boris had also immigrated to Canada. "After the war, we lost all contact. I didn't know that he came to Canada, and he didn't know either that I was here, and we met each other on the street in Montreal. It was a coincidence. You can imagine how that was!"

That was ten years ago. Since then, Goran has never returned to his native land. "I have a very beautiful memory of before the war. After the war, everything was destroyed. Even the people, they are not the same as before. There are a lot of people who are dead, a lot of families who have suffered, and a lot of buildings that are destroyed, it's not the same before. This is why I have never returned." Not only were spirits and buildings destroyed, the country itself no longer exists. "My country has now been uprooted. I am uprooted, because I have lost my country, the ex-Yugoslavia. Now it's divided into republics, etcetera."

Pre-war Sarajevo was much like any Canadian city. "We had a beautiful life. You must understand, Sarajevo is a multi-ethnic city. There are three different ethnic groups – Muslims, Serbs, Croats. We shared, we didn't know who was who, there was no difference, really." Aside from the extraordinary music they produce, the group is extraordinary because it unites all these different ethnic groups. "We play music like there is no difference between us, like there is in our country. We are together again, and we play music."

Gitan is French for Gypsy. Although, none of the members of the group are true gypsies in the wandering-around-the-country-side-in-caravans-wearing-rags sense (although they will be jumping into a van and playing in London, Ontario and Gatineau this

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summer), they certainly have become Gypsies, of a sort. "The Gypsies are nomads, and we chose *Tsigane* (Gypsy) music because we have become nomads. We left our country a long time ago and we voyage around, like real Gypsies." Appropriately titled, their CD *En Voyage* will certainly make you feel like a gypsy, so authentic is the music. If you closed your eyes while listening to it, you might see yourself in a wild party scene in an Emir Kusturica (*Black Cat, White Cat, Underground*) film. But you probably can't close your eyes, unless you can do so while dancing.

Goran described for me the gypsy culture in Europe. "They use music a lot, because, you have to understand that the gypsies, especially in Europe, are poor, mistreated. It's the music that brings hope to the lives of the Gypsies. They are really attached to music." Unlike the Gypsies, the members of *Les Gitans de Sarajevo* are all classically trained musicians. However, Goran recognises that often it is not schooling that counts but passion. "The music, it comes from the heart. For example, I know a lot of Gypsies, some of whom are beginners. But they continue, they don't quit; they are not educated. They have never studied music but they learn music very fast. It comes from the heart."

A remarkable thing about the *Les Gitans de Sarajevo* is that they have resisted the temptation to modernize the music. "It's very difficult today to play pure traditional music. Because, in my opinion, making a living is another thing. You have to add something more, something to make the public listen to the music. We didn't add a modern element, etcetera. It fits with our education. It comes from our country, our hearts."

Yes, Goran understands that tradition must be guarded. In the same spirit, he insists on speaking his mother tongue, Serbo-Croat with his children. "Sometimes my daughter speaks on the phone in French, and after, speaks to me in French. I say, 'No, we speak our language at home!'"

I was curious to know what language they spoke during rehearsals. "We speak our mother tongue. There is a girl who plays violin (Brigitte Dajcer from Calgary, Alberta), to her we speak English. There is a guy (bassist Georgi Stankov) from Bulgaria, to him we speak French. It is very confusing sometimes!"



Blue-collar Bohemia

Tom Russell's latest release, Hotwalker, focuses on the literary and musical forces that crept into his consciousness growing up in Los Angeles in the fifties and sixties. Roddy Campbell chats with Charles Bukowski's pen pal.

*...the public face of poetry
is so very*

cookie-cutter

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same

that while it is being performed

you can actually witness

millions of kids, butchers, bakers, jailers and dogs

being turned off of poetry forever and ever

- Charles Bukowski, grand slam

The late celebrated poet Charles Bukowski looms large on Tom Russell's latest disc, *Hotwalker*. The one-time literary outcast and the country outlaw shared a lot in common it seems.

Russell actually grew up in the same Los Angeles neighborhood. Back then, Bukowski, who died in 1994, wrote a regular column, *Notes Of A Dirty Old Man*, for *Open City* – an L.A. underground magazine that went bankrupt in the sixties. He later needed them for a book and Russell had salvaged all of them.

"I guess I was the only one who did," says Russell. "And I gave them back to him. What attracted me to Bukowski was the humour. He talked about sex and drinking and going to the race track – everything I wanted to know about. I grew up around a racetrack. I was in Catholic school. I wasn't getting any sex, Roddy. I've tried to make back for that now."

"I met him through the mail in 1969. We wrote right up until he died – there were about twelve letters. They should be coming out in a couple of weeks in a book called *Tough Company*. The letters are in there and the interviews I did with him."

"He was an authentic voice, a blue-collar worker. He worked in the Post Office for 15 years. So much of American letters is academic stuff. He was outside that whole world even more so than Steinbeck or Hemingway."

Hotwalker is the second installment of a three-part song-cycle that began with the superb *The Man From God Knows Where*. Released in 1999, it follows the journey of Russell's pioneering ancestors from Ireland and Norway as they settled in America. And he used such wonderful folk singers and musicians as Dolores Keane, Annborg Lien, Iris DeMent and Dave Van Ronk to tell their story.

Every bit as appealing and ambitious, *Hotwalker* pays tribute to American literary rebels such as Jack Kerouac, Edward Abbey, Bukowski and their musical equivalents, Woody Guthrie, Ramblin' Jack Elliott and Dave Van Ronk. It's all wrapped up in a sprawling soundtrack of gospel street singers, beat poetry, jazz, norteño, mariachi, folk and the hillbilly sounds of Bakersfield – music Russell grew up with in the fifties and sixties in

California. And if that were not enough, the nitrous oxide voice of circus midget Little Jack Horton – a composite character – acts as a frequent narrator.

"I knew about six of these little characters. I worked in a carnival in Puerto Rico in 1980. Little Jack is based on a character called Jack the Heat. He was this little gangster, midget, gypsy. Whether it was the amphetamines, he nonstop knocked everything. I put a lot of words in his mouth later and most of the profanities were edited out because of the FCC [Federal Communications Commission] here now, which is complete bs. A lot of American radio stations are afraid to play the record. Fuck 'em."

And yet *Hotwalker* opens with the mesmerising gospel singing of blind street singers, Baybie Hoover and Virginia Brown, who accompany themselves with an accordion and coins rattled in a tin cup. Russell sampled them from a Rounder LP recorded in the seventies to represent the Angels of Mercy he heard as a boy singing in Pershing Square, LA.

More surprising still, Russell dabbles in jazz for the first time. It's an interest that stems from an early infatuation with the likes of Chet Baker, Art Pepper and Stan Getz – white musicians who used to hang out in the black, nearby neighborhood of Watts. To accompany his beat narrative, Russell recruited veteran Austin saxophonist Tony Campise.

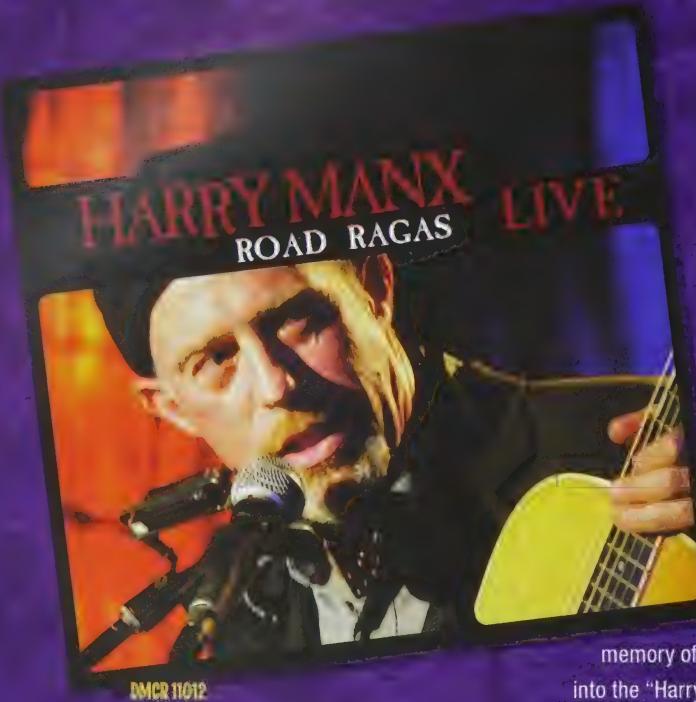
"Tony Campise had played with Chet Baker and Stan Kenton. He was only in the studio for an hour-and-a-half. He goes, 'What are you guys cutting here? You don't have to show me anything. Just start your rap and I'll play to you.' And that's what he did and he was brilliant."

"He wanted two hundred dollars. The bank called me an hour later and asked if I knew a guy called Tony Campise. I said, 'Yeah.' They said, 'We are just checking.' Because he went to one of those cheap cheque



Tom Russell

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Fusion

cashing places and paid forty dollars to cash his cheque immediately. It was like, 'Wow!' It was what a real, authentic old jazz guy would do. He either needed the money or he didn't trust the cheque."

Hotwalker (a hotwalker cools horses down at the race-track) also features one of the last recordings of Dave Van Ronk (1936-2002). He had played the part of *The Outcast on The Man From God Knows Where*. Russell met him in Greenwich Village when living in New York. They also hung out on the road with Nanci Griffith's *Other Voices, Other Rooms* tour.

"I had been up to his apartment several times and it always left its mark on me. I think my favourite piece on *Hotwalker* is a night with Van Ronk. It goes out with one of Dave's last singing performances. You can hear him struggling to breathe because he died of lung cancer. He was quiet a guy. He was quite a supporter of young writers."

Ramblin' Jack Elliott plays more of a cameo role – a brief commentary on Woody Guthrie as the introduction for *Woodrow*. Elliott had lived with the Guthrie family in the early fifties and became known as Woody's protégé. For research, Russell interviewed Elliott at length.

"I called him late at night and woke him up. He answers the phone with, 'This better be good. Who is this?' I said, 'It's me Jack, Tom.' He goes, 'Oh, okay. What do you want?' I said, 'Jack I'm going to record you. I want a bit about Woody and I don't want the crap. I want the real stuff.' He launched into this long story that I'd never heard about living with Woody.

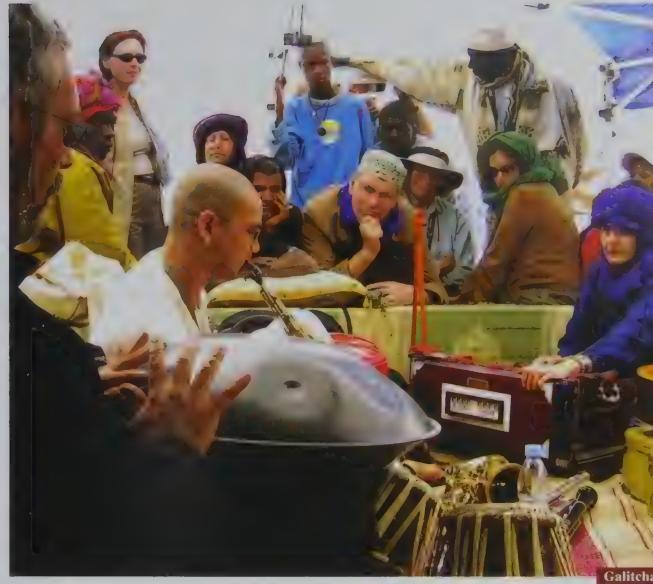
"'We'll,' he said, 'Woody woke up at four in the morning and he woke me up. He would brew a big pot of coffee and he'd get some Crown Royal whiskey and pour it in the coffee. And we would start playing. He showed me guitar stuff, old songs, blues runs for four or five hours before the sun came up about seven and the kids would wake.' Woody would get real tired, or pass out, or take a nap for three or four hours. Jack would babysit the kids. He said, 'That went on for a year or two.' So that's where he learned all his stuff.

"Near the end I asked him, 'Did a lot of people like Woody?' because I was trying to get away from the modern Guthrie family making Woody a flag-bearer for causes. He was a very difficult guy. And he did jail time. And he was a womanizer. I wanted to hear about that. And [Jack] said a lot of people didn't like Woody but tolerated him because he was a good songwriter. So I just tried to get at the real Woody with that one, [*Woodrow*]."

On an intriguing note, *Hotwalker* concludes with *America The Beautiful* gorgeously sang by Gretchen Peters. Hightone Records wanted it cut but Russell insisted. To him it signifies that radicals, bohemians, poets, musicians, songwriters and circus freaks help make America beautiful.

As for the final excerpt in this song-cycle, Russell has started work on a history of the west through the eyes of his sister-in-law, Claudia Russell, who lives on a ranch in an isolated area of California. She has shot two bears in her kitchen at point blank range and dates her family history back 150 years.

"She's the real thing. She has a very unique perspective. I've already got about five or six songs about the people that worked on her ranch. But I want to make it a big record like *The Man From God Knows Where*, so it needs time."



Galichita

Desert Blues

Galichita spent January among the mysterious blue people of Mali. They also wound up jamming with Toumani Diabate – one of the greatest kora players in the world. *Dispatches from the desert*: Chris MacLean.

Billed as the most extreme music festival in the world, Festival au Desert runs January 7–9, in the western Sahara. We arrive in Bamako, the capital city of Mali, January 4. Mali, in January, appears covered in a cloud of dust but it's pleasantly warm after the freezing rain and subzero temperatures of Montreal. Still, we face a two-day, 1000 km ride to the festival site over some very rough roads. The last stretch, some 60 km from Timbuctou, follows a track – no actual road – in the desert and it feels similar to driving through deep snow. We very much appreciate our drivers provided by the Canadian Embassy. And hey, Toyota Land Cruisers rock!

The setting is spectacular – white sand dunes and starry, starry desert skies. We stay in traditional tents which are made of something like loosely woven burlap. Adding to the mystique – the 'blue men of the desert', the nomadic Kel Tamashiq (also known as Taureg) people wearing deep indigo, blue-black cloth which colours their skin. Then, of course, there are the camels – hundreds of them. Their groaning wakens us each morning!

Artistic director Manny Ansar tells us that it's actually quite rare for the Tamashiq to gather in this way. I guess the logistics of getting so many people from across such a big desert region is daunting. "What I like most about this gathering," says Ansar, "is that it brings people from different places together to celebrate a common love for music and culture." According to him the challenge is to make the festival bigger and

more world class, with the support of the government and outside agencies, while maintaining the intimate experience and its relevance to the Tamashiq.

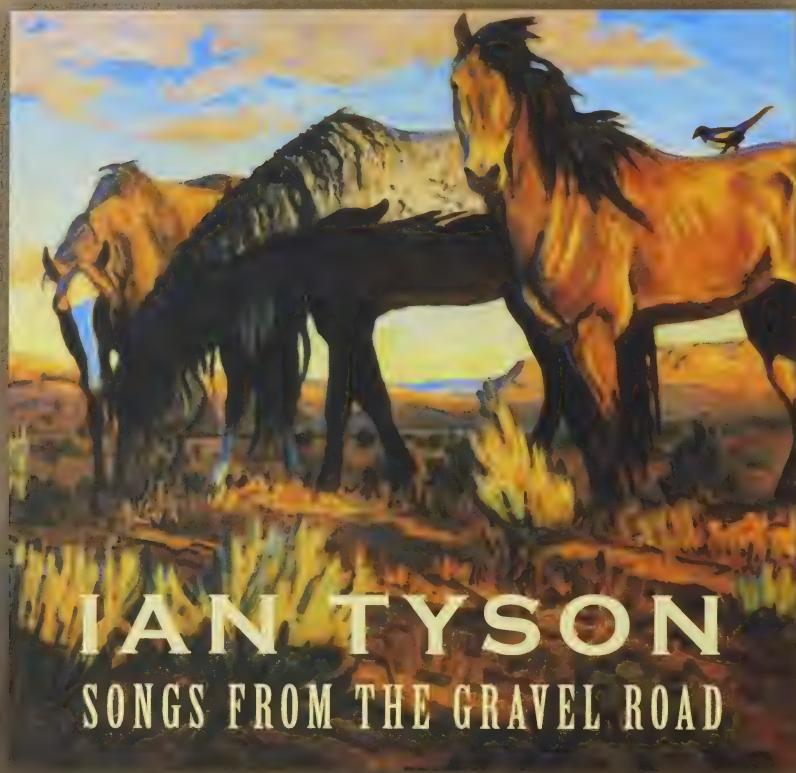
Admission and accommodations for tourists – from Europe, Australia and North America – was approximately 300 Euros. This included running water, full meals and accommodation in Western style tents. The festival is free for many locals. Malians from across the country and Tamashiq from desert regions of Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Algeria came by camel, on foot and with lorries and tour operators. All in all there are several thousand festival attendees. Small 'restaurants' and 'bars' keep the tourists relatively happy with liquid relaxants. Some find the conditions harsh – the blowing sand, burr-like prickly 'cram crams'. The toilets are awful but most of us soon find our own secluded spot to pee out on the dunes.

Little jamming takes place during the day but there is a lot of music. Crowds gather each afternoon to listen and watch the traditional Tamashiq call and response singing, hand clapping, calabash drumming and strumming or plucking of gut stringed lute-like instruments called tehardant. Adding to the entertainment are thunderous camel races with riders displaying great agility and ability and leaving us awed by-standing behind in a cloud of dust.

While Friday night's mainstage gets off to a slow start with chronic sound problems, we still enjoy the powerful voice of the 'Nightingale of the North', Timbuctou native, Khaira Arby. Saturday, Baba Salla, Mali's young rising star guitarist had the crowd rocking to his set of Wassoulou, Bambara and Songhai style blues.

On Sunday night, highlights included a Tamashiq band from Niger, named Etran Finatawa. Etran means stars in Tamashiq, and Finatawa means culture or tradition in Peul and Wadaabe. The musicians in the group were from those three ethnic groups.

IAN TYSON



**“... WHAT MAY BE THE FINEST
ALBUM OF HIS CAREER”**

LARRY LEBLANC, BILLBOARD MAGAZINE



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They also featured another great female singer, Fatima Aghali. Following them was another Nigerian group, Mamai Kassey, whose leader Yacouba Moumouni, played a Seysse, the beautiful smooth sounding flute of the Peul (Fulani) and put on a decent, high energy show. Next up was Malian super group Desert Blues. Finally, Galitcha – one of only two foreign bands at the festival – go on as the closing act, well past midnight.

The reception is worth the wait. It is magical. The

sky is clear and again filled with stars. Many of the audience are local Tamashaq and other Malians. In the middle of the set Kuljit decides to sing a much requested song, *Kabi Kabi*, which we band members don't really know. It's from a classic Bollywood movie very popular in that part of Africa. He sings acapella and the entire audience joins in. Shortly after, Kuljit invites a young Tamashaq man, Regan, up on stage. Regan is wearing the traditional long flowing white robe and turban. He reads a Tamashaq transla-

tion of the Punjabi lyrics in the devotional song, *Sanu Ik Pal Chain Naaway (I Cannot Live One Moment Without You)* to the audience before we play it.

Next Kuljit, wearing a green Sikh style turban stands up, the two men face each other and exchange turbans. Manny Ansar, is front row centre for the entire show and at that moment I see tears rolling down his cheeks. Everyone joins in singing and dancing while Kuljit and Regan dance, to Galitcha's *Ik Lurdki Diwani (One Beautiful Woman)*, dedicated to all the women in the audience. Many come up to us after and thank us for the show, saying it is the perfect way to end the festival.

Back in Bamako, we spend a week hanging out with orphaned street kids, playing music and getting to know the people who are setting up a centre for these orphans. They are such inspiring kids – all of them having experienced significant trauma in their lives. But they are generous and light hearted and anxious to show their abilities to sing, dance and play whatever instruments they are given.

For our last night, we went to the Santaro – a club where Toumani Diabate, Mali's most famous kora player, is onstage and invites us up to play with him and his band. It is a fantastic way to end our first, but hopefully not last, visit to Mali.

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The Making of a Masterpiece

A quarter-century after the release of Penguin Eggs, Ken Hunt looks back at the all-too-brief but brilliant career of Nic Jones



Issue in, issue out, our masthead has explained the inspirational connection. Now it is time to talk about Nic Jones. Folk music's favourite tense must be the past continuous. One of the most influential people to wrest the past into my continuous was the Kent-born singer, guitarist and fiddler Nic Jones. Twenty-five years ago on 1 June 1980, Topic Records officially released 12TS411, better known as Penguin Eggs, a nine-track masterpiece that took the British scene by storm, much like Dick Gaughan's Handful of Earth did in 1981.

Even though Nic Jones hasn't played professionally for decades, those in the know with attuned ears will hear a lot of him about. Martin Carthy sourced him for the tune of *Sir Patrick Spens on Signs of Life* (1998), Kate Rusby his *Drowned Lovers* (2002) and Dylan regurgitated Jones' *Canadee-I-O* uncredited hook, pillaged line and dishonourable stinker on *Good As I Been To You* (1992). His *Annachie Gordon* has been the starting block for most subsequent versions as well as inspiring John Hegley's 1980 poem about first getting turned on to folk music.

The press release that accompanied the 1980 album release, written anonymously, as was the custom – but by Topic's Tony Russell (the spare-time editor of Old Time Music) – was a model of concision and clarity. He did not 'descend to panegyrics'. 'Nic Jones is one of the most remarkable musicians in the country, in any field of music – a deeply accomplished singer and guitarist, whose music revives the almost lost art of the song-as-story. Getting the tale across is his first concern. As he says, "the real thing should be you standing up there singing and people listening to the song." And as one reviewer has said, "he has always selected his songs with an unerring taste...he is one of the very few really outstanding singers and stylists of his generation."

Nicolas Paul Jones, the youngest of three children, was born on 9 January 1947 in Orpington, England. As far as folk music was concerned, he never got his rightful Damascene conversion. It just slipped into his consciousness. 'I never knew anything about this sort of music until about four years ago,' he told Melody Maker's Andrew Means in November 1970, 'when I joined a group that was partly traditional. I actually got to know about traditional music through that.'

The group to which he was referring, The Halliard – 'a lurid chapter in my life,' he joked in the liner notes to Banddogs (1978) – was also the resident act at the Chelmsford Folk Club in Chelmsford, Essex. The group's name was a variant of 'halyard', a nautical term for the rope or tackle used for raising a sail. By 1966 Jones had taken the plunge and become a full-time musician, replacing Geoff Harris in the group. Together with Dave Moran ('always the driving force') and Nigel Paterson, he stayed until the group's end in late 1968. Talking to Jerry Gilbert for Sounds two years later, he said, 'The Halliard split because we didn't get on together musically any more. We'd gone through a period of about six months when our ideas didn't conflict but eventually we started having ideas that the others didn't like.'

For Jones, The Halliard remains more than a footnote, no matter how uneventful their recording career. The one album that came out on Saga, one of the period's budget labels found in all good Woolworth's, set them up as mock-Dubliners to exploit their massive UK hit with *Seven Drunken Nights*. The real significance of the group was their reassembling songs in the old 'trad. arr.' way. 'We'd beef doing a lot of broadside material,' he told Gilbert. But what they really did was beef up material.

Their failing was twofold: too little business savvy and too much modesty. They reset and remoulded *Boys of Bedlam*, *Calico Printer's Clerk* and *Lancashire Lads*, without bothering with the paperwork, an oversight since remedied. (And a Halliard songbook is imminent.) Jones' reworkings from this period include his 9/8 setting of *Billy Don't You Weep For Me*. He chores remembering how deviations from 3/4 and 4/4 were designed to increase the likelihood of him getting to sing.

1968 was a year of massive changes for our hero. The Halliard split; he went solo; he wed Julia Seymour; and the newly weds settled in Chelmsford. What is too often overlooked in the British folk scene narrative is that significant folk acts – witness Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger, Louis Killen and the High Level Ramblers, the Spinners and the Watersons – ran folk clubs too; in 1968 the Joneses took over the running of the Chelmsford Folk Club as a professional business too.

Jones made his solo debut album, *Ballads and Songs* (1970), for Trailor. It and its successor *Nic Jones* (1971) crystallise Jones' contemporary folk club act. Ultimately they amount to signposts to things to come, portents of his signature guitar style – a composite of percussive, rhythmic playing with ringing snaps, tastefully deployed melodic ornamentations and, above all, economy. By 1971, Peter

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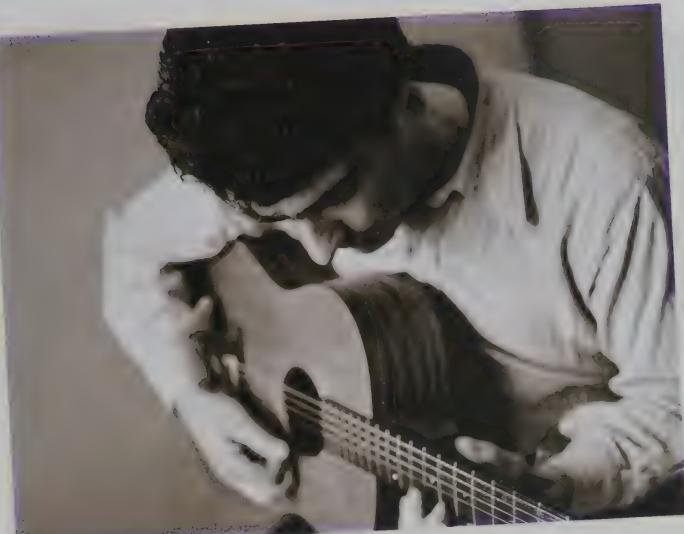


Photo courtesy: Dave Peabody

Bellamy, an early champion ("a great character") made the observation, in my mind's eye with a sardonic squint, "Have you noticed that all the people who used to sound like Martin Carthy have started to sound like Nic Jones?" Jones became one of England's most distinguished stylist gurus for the acoustic guitar, having sopped up Charlie Byrd, Hank Marvin, Wes Montgomery, Martin Carthy, Bert Jansch and Davey Graham.

In June 1971 he had the experience of working on Shirley Collins' *No Roses* (1971). It telegraphed the word about him around the world. He only appears on two tracks, singing and playing fiddle on *The White Hare* and, most notably of all, the album's *The Murder of Maria Marten*. "Shirley was one of the most perfect singers," he exclaims, "because she sang what she felt. She felt the words. She wasn't one for flash settings. She found the beauty within the songs. The words meant a lot to her. She inspired me in many ways. She made me realise how important the words were: they're more important than the accompaniments. I used to play flash things and people would go, 'Wowee!' Blokes especially can 'do flash', do a few riffs here, a few flash notes there. Everyone admires them. People don't listen to the words; and that's a bad thing. Shirley Collins showed me how important the words were. That was the key thing. That affected me a lot."

To this day, he gets animated – and competitive – about games such as Go, Othello and checkers – going so far as to get a guide to checkers strategies – but his passion for chess remains paramount. His third solo album, *The Noah's Ark Trap* (1977), named after a chess ploy, and *From The Devil To A Stranger* (1978) made it plain that he was a major interpreter. Yet in January 1979, he told Colin Irwin: "My first two records were hideous and the last two have been less hideous." Half-truths make great copy. A project with Pete & Chris Coe and Tony Rose called Bandogs led to the one-off *Bandogs* and two promotional tours.

Next, Jones signed to Topic for what turned into a one-album deal. Belying the polished fluency of *Penguin Eggs*, much of it was pure spontaneity from the assembled team of Dave Burland (vocals), Bridget Danby (vocals/recorder) and Tony Hall (melodeon). Burland had received a phone call the day before and went into the studio without knowing what the material was. Whatever they did, it soared. In 1998, the US songwriter Peter Case declared it "one of the finest acoustic albums ever made" to me. It is one of the ten definitive British folk albums of all time.

One of the mysteries of Nic Jones' career is how he found two of his most important repertoire items, *The Humpback Whale* and *The Little Pot Stove* – the latter the source of *Penguin Eggs*. Now, Jones was irrevocably secretive about his sources – "All the songs on this record have been learned from books, tapes, records and scraps of paper, all sent to me by friends that I have

made around the folk club scene," was his penny-pinching, 'official' low-down on his reworkings. He treated raw material as a vehicle to take him somewhere else. Over and over again Jones displayed an enviable ability to take a handful of musical motifs or lyrical cues and turn them into something inevitable in musical terms. Thus, initial pressings identified *Humpback Whale* as traditional and *Stove* as copyright control. Later, it emerged that they were by Harry Robertson (1923–1995), an Australian songwriter who sliced true-life experiences into fact-and-fiction songs, especially from his days aboard whalers. Two such were *Wee Pot Stove* (sometimes called *Wee Dark Engine Room*) and *The Ballina Whalers* (Jones' *Humpback Whale*). *Penguin Eggs* has several antipodean flavours, most likely picked up on tour in Australia. Robertson's own *Whale Chasing Men* (1971), now reissued on ScreenSound Australia, was available – as was a songbook. But Nic Jones can no longer be definite... On 26 February 1982, driving home late from Glossop, he received massive

injuries in his "argument with a brick lorry". It robbed him of much of his memory of events prior to the accident; he fondly remembers tobogganing with his children, Heather and Joe that winter around the December. The crash itself is something that happened to somebody else almost.

Despite guesting on albums by Gerry Hallom, for example, effectively Jones' professional musical career went on infinite hold. Compounding the family's enormous distress, his albums prior to *Penguin Eggs* sank into a moral and legal quagmire – a tragedy they feel no desire to rehash. That *Penguin Eggs* remains one of Topic's best-sellers is only partial consolation. Likewise the fact that Jones benefits from two anthologies of club, concert and studio performances, *In Search of Nic Jones* (1998) and *Unearthed* (2001) on their own Mollie Music label.

The Mollie Music releases remind how singular he was with their covers of Jeff Deitchmann's *The Jukebox As She Turned*, John W. Bratton's *Teddy Bears' Picnic* and Ivor Cutler's *I'm Going In A Field* and his own songs *Green To Grey*, *Ruins By The Shore* and *Rapunzel*. In 2004 three additions to the historical record from 1980 appeared on the Sidmouth International Festival compilation, *Folk Festival* on Gott Discs.

Thankfully, music still remains a constant, though. "There are things I like now," he grins, "that I wouldn't have liked then. I used to go for folksongs a lot. Now I tend to write pop songs and jazz things more. Radiohead's my favourite group. I still keep in touch with old colleagues. I'm looking forward to hearing Barry Dransfield's new album [*Unruly*]. If Robin or Barry Dransfield make a record, I want to hear it!"

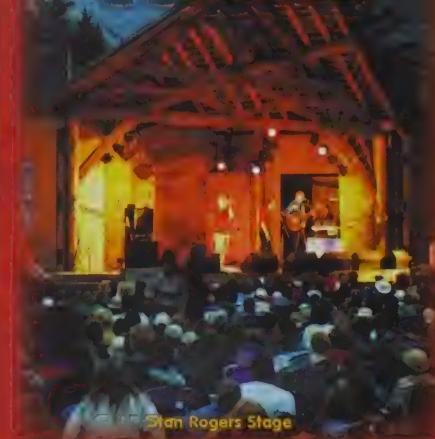
I am of an age to have seen Nic Jones perform at the height of his powers. It pains me to say that in both cases, the visual images are stronger than the musical. Since my contemporaneous notes are lost, my musical memories are certainly contaminated by accretions of memory and too many hours of listening/pleasure/sorrow. Each time I revisit *Penguin Eggs*, my mind's ear hears Jones playing most if not all of *Penguin Eggs* in the back function room of Sutton's Red Lion (where the Rolling Stones played and Pentangle formed). The word matchlessness comes to mind.

With particular thanks to Nic and Julia Jones, Jerry Gilbert and Phil Wilson. Visit www.nicjones.com for information about obtaining his recordings in Europe and North America.



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Photo courtesy: Dave Peabody

Nic Jones

Penguin Eggs

Topic

Reviewed By Colin Irwin

"There's swordfish and whalemeat sausage
And fresh penguin eggs a treat
Then we struggle on to work each day
Through the icy winds and sleet..."
- *The Little Pot Stove*, track four *Penguin Eggs*

It's a bloody weird name for a magazine, that's for sure. Bloody weird name for an album, too. But that's Nic Jones for you. The title of his 1977 LP (albums were where you collected stamps in those days) *The Noah's Ark Trap* is a reference to a particularly devastating chess strategy he'd successfully used to deck many an opponent's king. It's an outstanding album in its own right, but like all his first four solo albums, long lost in the hideous vinyl void that's claimed so much of the 70s Leader/Trailer catalogue and now almost impossible to find. Some still claim *The Noah's Ark Trap* was Nic's finest hour and it's true, it did take the folk revival up a notch with its driving percussive edge and the lightness of touch which Nic applied to his inventive guitar arrangements. *Annachie Gordon*, in particular, became a landmark track which Mary Black in particular and the Irish folk community in general adopted and adapted with love and admiration. His next album *From The Devil To A Stranger* (1978) has its champions too, with its easy, relaxed sound, tracks butting into each other firmly establishing Nic – with Martin Carthy – as the British folk scene's best-loved and most influential stylist.

That was also when he teamed up with Tony Rose and Pete & Christine Coe in, okay let's be silly and call it a folk 'supergroup' – Bandogs. Two tours and one attractive but flawed album later and it was 1980 and the stage was set for Nic Jones's masterpiece.

From that distinctive guitar intro to opening track *Canadée-I-O* you know he's moved the bar up again. His singing is so relaxed and laid-back, but almost imperceptibly it's pulled along by an acoustic guitar accompaniment that's deceptively simple, yet carries a subtle insistence that gives it the weight and impact of a rock band. Jones's apparently nonchalant performance is actually the hallmark of an artist so completely on top of his game that he appears to be doing it in his sleep but is actually taking it somewhere new without you realising it. Whatever else, *Penguin Eggs* is an album that swings.

The measure of its greatness as I listen to it now is that it still sounds fresh as a daisy. It hasn't aged one iota in the quarter century since its release and there's not a single note, arrangement or accompaniment, let alone a track that doesn't sound absolutely perfect. Those technical boys would have trouble doing a remix of this. Tony Hall chips in with some perky melodeon – which turns *Barrack St* into a track that actually makes you want to dance – and there are some additional vocals from Dave Burland and Bridget Danby. But essentially it's an album totally fused by the warmth, character and natural inventiveness of Jones himself. His genius is making everything sound so simple and natural, even the joyous instrumental *Plaverty Davis*, a crucial ingredient in his other killer role on this album as a master sto-

ryteller. There's such an unforced quality about everything he does here it really does feel part of a tradition that goes back through the centuries, yet the truth is there was more than a little originality on his part, be they in the tune and in some cases the lyric too, before they reached this stage. Indeed, tracks like *Flandyke Shore*, *Barrack St*, *Little Pot Stove*, *The Drowned Lovers* and *Courting Is A Pleasure* are so distinctively Nic Jones, you can't really imagine anyone else doing them, though one or two have tried.

He did get a bit of flak in some quarters for singing *Humpback Whale* and before he did it on stage would often make a speech explaining that while he was against whaling he thought it was a great song that says a lot about the attitudes and conditions that the whalers worked in. He also included a rare cover version of a contemporary song, New Zealander Paul Meters' *Farewell To The Gold*, with a chorus to die for that became Nic's showstopper. Ultimately, though, it's an album that holds together full of telling songs revealing something of the human soul, presented in an original, enlightened and, yes, exciting manner.

All the suggestions were that it would launch Nic Jones on a new plateau, breaking completely clear of the shackles binding most of the folk revival singers. The directions offered on *Penguin Eggs* suggest this would at some stage have involved his own songwriting and who knows where else his superlative guitar technique and buoyant imagination may have taken him. Instead, less than two years later, his career was shattered by an horrendous car crash as he drove home to Essex from a gig in Glossop and *Penguin Eggs* turned out not to be the new beginning we'd all imagined, but the end of his recording career.

But its enduring reputation is not for sentimental reasons. Bob Dylan, after all, recorded his own version of *Canadée-i-o* (without crediting Nic). John Wesley Harding made a whole album in a personal tribute to him and many of the new young generation of British folkies, Kate Rusby and Jim Moray in particular, are in awe of what he did on *Penguin Eggs*.

These days Nic lives quietly but happily in York playing chess a lot and developing a strange passion for the works of Radiohead. But without the full use of his right arm, he confines his own guitar playing to the privacy of his own home, shrugging off compliments about *Penguin Eggs* or any of his other albums. The UK Sunday newspaper The Observer recently held a poll of the 100 best albums ever made and *Penguin Eggs* made a surprise appearance at No 79 one place below the Rolling Stones' *Let It Bleed* but one place above David Bowie's *Station To Station*.

"It was alright," said Nic with customary self-effacement when you ask him about *Penguin Eggs* now. "I could play a bit and I sang okay, but I weren't anything special. It was just an album..."

An army of folk music lovers would beg to differ.

Talk to him about it now and Nic is impossibly modest. "Oh it's nothing special."

A Return to Prine Time



John Prine

*After a decade on the sidelines – raising kids, recovering from neck cancer, and playing for free pints in Irish pubs – John Prine has finally released a new recording, *Fair & Square*. “Me and [Steve] Goodman were Chicago folk music. It was a great thing to represent,” he tells Roddy Campbell*

“Right, you get 30 minutes,” says the lovely Lindsey, publicist from Joe’s Garage: ‘tubes, tubes and realities rotated’.” Mr. Prine will call you.”

Well, Mr. Prine does indeed call. From Reno, Nevada as a matter of fact. And what’s more he’s in great form telling some cracking tales. Like the time Sam Phillips threatened to kick his ass and subsequently saved his life. Or how John Belushi used to do Marlon Brando reciting *Angel From Montgomery*. Good old days. Wonderful detours. But the clock’s ticking and so to the business at hand.

John Prine has just released *Fair & Square*, his first disc of original songs in almost a decade. And it’s just what you have come to expect from one of America’s great and still vital songwriters. No radical departure here, then, just the usual motley crew of colourful, blue-collar characters, a smattering of homespun wisdom, the odd belly laugh, a tribute or two to love, and all of it wrapped up in deceptively simple but memorable tunes.

Oh, did I mention the vitriol? No! Well it’s not

exactly something you equate with John Prine. But he truly has the gloves off on *Some Humans Ain’t Human*. Witness:

*Have you ever noticed
When you’re feeling good
There’s always a pigeon
That’ll come shit on your hood
Or you’re feeling your freedom
And the world’s off your back
Some cowboy from Texas starts his own war in Iraq.*

The punch line comes with the chorus.
*Some humans ain’t human
Some people ain’t kind
They lie through their teeth
With their head up behind.*

He wrote that song last August after U.S. President George Bush’s whirlwind visit to Ireland. Prine was on his way through Shannon airport to play a gig with Kris Kristofferson in Killarney. Security closed this busy international airport behind him due to Bush’s arrival. Thousands of protesters were on the streets of Ireland that day but the entire Irish army built a 15-mile cordon around the President.

“Tens of thousands of demonstrators were saying get out of Iraq,” says Prine. “He doesn’t get to see that unless they put the paper under his plate of eggs in the morning. I’m not overly political... but I don’t happen to like how the Bush administration

puts a spin on dissenters. You know: ‘You don’t support the troops because you don’t support the war.’ That’s an old piece of bull shit they used during Vietnam. I support the troops. I support the troops getting home safe. Get them out of Iraq; we don’t belong there. Anyway, I decided to say something.”

And how has the Republican Praetorian Guard, that bastion of mature, open-minded discourse, reacted to it John?

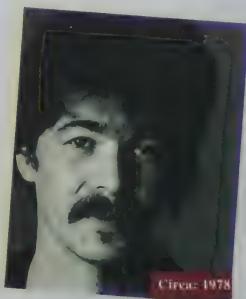
“Some people return their T-shirts and walk out. The only thing I don’t understand is when I get mail and they say they’ve been listening to me for thirty, thirty-five years. What in the hell did they think I was talking about thirty years ago? I thought very little of George Bush’s first four years in office. I didn’t think enough of him to write a song about him and now he’s getting me to the point I’m losing my sense of humour.”

Thirty-five years ago Prine wrote *Your Flag Decal Won’t Get You Into Heaven Anymore* – a brilliant, satirical, barb aimed at evangelical Readers Digest subscribers who considered support for the war in Vietnam their patriotic duty. These people still exist only now they are backing the illegal occupation of Iraq. So *Your Flag Decal*... was dusted down and given another good airing.

“I didn’t think I’d ever do that again. I’ve got plenty of songs to sing. I don’t need to go into my national treasure trove of ancient political songs. It’s like they put a red carpet out for it. So I’m singing it. The sooner I can stop singing it the better for me. But I’ll continue singing it as long as it keeps rubbing [the Bush administration] the wrong way.”

The million-dollar question soon arises, though. How could it not. I mean, what has he really been up to for the past 10 years? Raising kids it seems. Prine met his third wife Fiona while on tour in Dublin. She managed a recording studio there. A long-distance relationship ensued for almost five years before he proposed. They now have two sons Jack (9) and Tommy (10). First-time fatherhood, apparently, took a bit of adjusting to.

“I had two kids. That’s when the lights went



Circa: 1978

out for me. For about a year-and-a-half I was just stunned. I was 48 years old and never been a dad before. I couldn't believe what a great feeling that was. So I spent a lot of time with my kids. My hours were totally turned around. I had to set time aside to write and I never had to do that before. I'd stay up all night and sleep all day. Whenever lightning would strike and I'd get a song I'd write it down. When I'd get ten of them I'd go in the studio. But those days are over because I'm a full-time dad. I just had to get used to putting order into my life. Some of it I resisted and some of it I didn't. But it's all for the better."

The Prines bought a cottage in a picture-postcard village near Galway on the west coast of Ireland. There they spend their holidays. Fitting in right well with the locals, he drinks at Green's, one of the great character pubs in all of the country. On occasion you can find him there playing for free pints. Only on summer nights, mind. And never on a night that infringes on the traditional sessions.

"Most of my friends are musicians. We'll take our guitars and go down to Green's and give them a few tunes. It's a great little pub. But if you show up without your guitar, and into serious drinking, nobody bothers you."

He's already done the mandatory recording session with The Chieftains, *The Girl I Left Behind* for *Further Down The Old Plank Road*, and chuckles at their propensity for work. "I love The Chieftains. To me they're like the Rolling Stones of traditional music." Clearly delighted with his time spent abroad, *Fair & Square* pays tribute to Ireland with *My Darlin' Hometown*.

"I co-wrote that with a buddy, Roger Cook. Now Roger's from Bristol, England. There's not too many people more English than Roger. He has been bugging me for five years to write a song about Ireland. Depending on what time of year it is, he's frightened to go there. I told him we had to add a few things like the ice-skating otherwise I'd be drawing a map directly to my house. I hope the Irish forgive me."

Unlike his initial self-penned albums, almost half of this latest release he co-wrote. He puts it down to living in Nashville. When he and his friends are not playing snooker or dominoes, it's inevitable they write songs together, he says. An utterly beautiful version of Blaze Foley's *Clay Pigeons* also shows up on *Fair & Square*. Shot to death in 1989, this West-Texas cult figure inspired Lucinda Williams's *Drunken Angel* and Townes Van Zandt's *Blaze's Blues*. By various accounts, he and Prine ran around Austin, Texas, together in the seventies.

"He was a kind of itinerant sort of fellow. He liked to hang out in bars and sleep in dumpsters. I got a letter from an old girlfriend of his that said she heard I played Blaze's tunes and that I knew him under the name of Deputy Dawg. In other words, I never knew that I knew Blaze."

Prine's current interest in Foley began when Merle Haggard recorded *If I Could Only Fly*. Prine was smitten by the song and made inquiries about its author. Eventually his friend, Elizabeth Kemp, who used to sing backup for Foley, passed along some bootleg tapes.

"There's a live version *If I Could Only Fly* and right after it he does *Clay Pigeons*. The song floored me. I got so obsessed with it I couldn't get it out of my head. So I had to learn it. We used to do it in sound check but it came off so good we decided to put it on the record."

Not to over dramatize the next point, but John Prine is actually lucky to be alive himself. In 1998 he discovered a lump on his neck. It came and went so he didn't really worry about it too much. Eventually, though, he saw several different surgeons. All their diagnosis pointed to neck cancer (not to be confused with throat cancer). But each doctor had a different prognosis. Finally, Prine settled for experimental treatment in a clinic in Memphis. Knox Phillips got to hear about it. The son of legendary Sun Records founder, Sam Phillips, and producer of Prine's 1979 album *Pink Cadillac*, Knox had the same form of cancer two years before and had gone to that very clinic in Memphis and almost died because of its medical incompetence. Knox and his father grew extremely concerned for Prine's well being.

"Sam and Knox talked about it and decided to butt in. They were determined to send me to Houston, Texas, where they found the very best doctor for neck cancer. And it took Sam an hour on the phone to convince me. Finally he just told me if I didn't he'd come to Nashville and kick my ass every inch of the way. And it's hard to say no to Sam Phillips. Sam had a religious fervor to everything he talked about, whether it was women, music or religion, it still sounded religious. And when he told me he was going to do that if I didn't go see this doctor I said, 'Mr Phillips I will.' And I went and as soon as I met this doctor I knew he was the right guy. . . I'm a hardheaded person, especially when it comes to anything personal."

"That took me out of action for about a year-and-a-half with the surgery and the treatment, the radiation. It takes a while to get your strength back. Whether it was the radiation or the treatment, I'm

not sure which, but my voice got lowered in the process. Just a bit. I was very lucky because it was a pretty bad type of cancer."

Just prior to his illness he had recorded *In Spite of Ourselves*, an album inspired by country duets made popular by the likes of George Jones and Tammy Wynette, Porter Wagoner and Dolly Parton, Ernest Tubbs and Loretta Lynn. Released in 1999 as Prine recovered, it featured the likes of Lucinda Williams, Emmylou Harris and Dolores Keane. The hands-down showstopper, though, was the hilarious rather risqué title track featuring a normally straight-laced Iris DeMent singing lines like: *He ain't got laid in a month of Sundays/I caught him once and he was sniffin' my undies*. Her brilliantly deadpan contribution you can put down to Prine's powers of persuasion.

"I called Iris, I said, 'Iris I've got a song with some questionable material in it.' I said, 'I really believe strongly that you are the person to sing it. Would you at least listen to it a couple of times and then call me and let me know?' So I sent it to her. I don't hear anything for two weeks. So finally I call her (she laughs), I said, 'What's it going to be?' She said, 'Not while my mother's still living,' and we both start laughing. So she came in. It was very brave of her in retrospect, because she came into the studio with five guys in there and did that song. We got it in two tries."

John Prine was born in Maywood, Illinois, in



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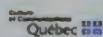
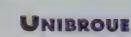


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1946, and was drafted into the army straight out of high school. At the height of the Vietnam War, he got posted to Germany. On his return to Maywood, a suburb of Chicago, Prine became a postman and made up songs as he delivered the mail. Chicago, at the time, had a flourishing folk scene. And he would make his debut at the Fifth Peg in 1968. Alongside his good buddy Steve Goodman, Prine soon became the toast of the Windy City.

Everybody knows how Prine got his big break. Still, it's worth retelling. Just this once, Janis Joplin had put Kris Kristofferson's *Me And Bobby McGee* on top of the hit parade in the spring of 1971. That summer Kristofferson arrived in Chicago to play a week at the Quiet Knight. Steve Goodman opened and convinced the Texan to go hear his good buddy Prine at the nearby Earl of Old Town. With Paul Anka in tow (a tale best saved for another day), they arrived just as the club was closing. Prine was actually asleep under a booth. He rallies, though, and sang about a dozen songs. Kristofferson wanted a dozen more. He then brought both Prine and Goodman to open for him at New York's noted club, The Bitter End. Jerry Wexler, the famed Atlantic Records producer who coined the term rock 'n' roll, caught the show and immediately signed Prine. *John Prine* was released later that year, sleeve notes by Kris

Kristofferson. Of their Chicago encounter, he wrote: "It must have been like stumbling onto Dylan when he first burst onto the [Greenwich] Village scene. One of these rare, great times when it all seems worth it."

Well, was there ever a better debut than *John Prine – Illegal Smile, Sam Stone, Angel From Montgomery, Hello In There...* timeless, wonderful songs.

There's now a commotion on the other end of the line. The maid's at the door. Cell phones are ringing and his minder's in his ear. The Denver Business Journal is scheduled for a word. "I'm sure they are very interested in my music," laughs Prine and he graciously makes one final comment on the Chicago folk scene before he hangs up.

"In hindsight it was just incredible. It was every bit as good as the folk scene in the sixties in Greenwich Village. We all knew and supported each other. Second City was across the street from us. Belushi was there at the time and these guys would come over in-between skits and sit in the odd time. Belushi used to do Marlon Brando reciting *Angel From Montgomery*. These were great days, man. Me and Goodman were Chicago folk music. It was a great thing to represent. It was all over by the late seventies just about the time both of us decided to go our own ways. He wanted to



John Prine and Steve Goodman

go to LA and I wanted to go to Nashville and by that time it had petered out.

"But both Goodman and I had to go to New York to finally get a record contract. Nobody would sign you directly out of Chicago. It was great because we did that too and we almost got a ticker-tape parade in Chicago. No Chicago musicians got record contracts but me and Goodman got one within twenty-four hours of going to New York. It was just a great time, and now looking back on it, it was a piece of time it would be pretty hard to duplicate."

Prine time is over.

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Remembering Martyn Bennett

Martyn Bennett was born in Newfoundland but raised in Scotland. He died this past spring after a lengthy battle with cancer. "Bennett was the first to get the techno-folk thing right simply because he truly understood and loved them both," writes Colin Irwin.

Some things just aren't fair. Some things just shouldn't happen. Some things just make you want to scream in rage and frustration...

In truth it didn't come as a huge shock when the inevitable news finally came through at the end of January, but it didn't make it any easier. It's always sad to lose a musician, but its incomprehensible when that musician is as young, dynamic, brilliant and as widely loved as Martyn Bennett.

He was 33 when the cancer he'd fought so courageously for so long finally took him. He still made some of the most thrilling groundbreaking music of recent times – his extraordinary last two albums, *Glen Lyon* and *Grit*, during the darkest days of his illness – and the most galling thing of all was that this was a guy so full of imagination, flair, technical ability and determination, you know his best work was ahead of him.

Martyn knew full well the likely outcome. After a series of major operations, he decided enough was enough, he wouldn't have any more hospital treatment, he'd live as close to the earth as he could on the Isle of Mull with his beloved wife Kirsten and let nature take his course. "I don't know how this is going to end," he told me, "but I've a pretty good idea..."

He also told me about the making of that amazing last album *Grit*. He didn't play a note on it. He was too ill. And besides, he'd smashed up all his instruments in a blind fury one day when the frustration and injustice of it all got the better of him. "It was crazy," he laughed wryly later. "All those beautiful instruments, thousands of pounds worth...and I killed them. I was just consumed by this...I dunno what it was...madness." You wanted to put your arms round him and hug him but he looked so frail you were scared he'd break.

He was always a special guy, alright.

Martyn was born in Newfoundland, in the Gaelic speaking farming area of the Codroy Valley immersed in the traditional culture of the region. His parents were both Scots who'd met and married in Canada – he later described them as hippies – and his mother Margaret sang him the Gaelic songs she'd learned in her own childhood on the Isle of Skye. They moved to Quebec for a short period but Martyn was just a boy of six when he left Canada with his mother to move to Scotland. They lived in the Kingussie area, where Martyn, at the grand age of 10, first picked up a set of bagpipes. Less than



Photo by Karen Bennett

two years later he was winning piping competitions and being spoken of as a child prodigy.

In many ways it was an extraordinary upbringing. Apart from the dual backgrounds in Canada and Scotland, his mother's Gaelic sense of tradition, wanderlust and empathy with nature ensured Martyn had his own rarified view of the world. He clearly remembered as a child spending time under canvas travelling with gypsies and listening to some of the great old travelling singers he was later to sample with such devastating effect on that *Grit* album.

In 1986 Margaret and Martyn moved to Edinburgh so that he could study at Edinburgh City School of Music, where he studied classical music, learned to read and write music and added the violin and piano to his armoury of instruments. It was, he once said, the most important three years of his life. At this point he seemed lost to traditional music as he moved on to the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow. But the constraints of classical music were never likely to hold him and he led a schizophrenic existence, playing correct classical violin with a symphony orchestra by day and driving fiddle in informal pub sessions by night.

Like half of Britain's youth during the 1990 'Summer Of Love', he got into the rave club scene of incessant beats and sequencers thundering out dance music throughout the land. The way he told it he took to busking at weekends and one Saturday was playing fiddle tunes in the middle of Glasgow when somebody parked a loud beatbox near him and switched it up to full volume. Instead

of taking umbrage or finding a new pitch, Martyn started playing along to the rhythm of the beats and realised that far from being incompatible, the old Scots traditional tunes and the modern beats could work very well together. When all was said and done it was all dance music...

"For the classically trained composer the dance world is such an attractive place as it encapsulates the same musical ethos," he said. "It is principally about sound and scale, tension and release, power and detail – much like the classical canvas."

He bought himself an electronic keyboard and digital sequencer to see where it would take him. It took him to a self-titled first album in 1996 with the small independent label Eclectic and then on to some high profile gigs – including a Bravheart party in front of Mel Gibson and all at Stirling Castle and a sensational Hogmanay show at Edinburgh Castle. He had dreadlocks in those days and the sight of a shirtless, dreadlocked Bennett playing bagpipes as if the hounds of hell were on his tail while electronic beats boomed out behind him turned him into a cult hero and a bit of a heart-throb too in certain parts of Scotland.

By this time he'd already overcome one bout of cancer and if anybody needed confirmation that a thrilling, highly original, contemporary talent had arrived, then his wonderful 1998 album *Bothy Culture* offered it in abundance. It was an album that drew deeply from the authentic well of the tradition, yet translated it into a new language. Ancient rural music transposed into a very modern urban setting...it was full of inspired curios and eccentric

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whims, drawing on Scandinavian and Islamic music as well as Scots traditional tunes. But perhaps *Bothy Culture's* finest moment was *Hallaig*, an eight-moment masterpiece built around the famous Sorley MacLean poem which included the Gaelic bard MacLean himself reading the poem specifically for the album shortly before he died.

Martyn was on a roll, forming the band Cuillin with his wife Kirsten who he'd met at school in Edinburgh, splitting their time halfway between the folk and the clubbing scenes. Two alien cultures married by a gentle young man deeply immersed in both cultures. Several had tried to mix the two extremes but mostly they were rooted in one camp and were let down by not properly understanding the other. Bennett was the first to get the techno folk thing right simply because he truly understood and loved them both.

He was nervous about the reaction of the folk world to the liberties he was taking with the music. He often said it was aimed more at the clubbing scene to expand their ears rather than the other way around because he still loved traditional music in its purest form and loved nothing better than listening to a great solo fiddle player. It galled him slightly that his experiments largely fell on deaf ears in the clubs and the folkies were the ones risking it to.

He didn't have much luck after *Bothy Culture*. It was a rightly acclaimed album but contractual problems delayed the release of a follow-up and the momentum was lost. There was a dramatic gig

in Paris prior to the opening 1998 World Cup soccer match between Scotland and Brazil when an audience of celebrities went bananas and Sean Connery and Ewan MacGregor ended up dancing on stage with the band. There was also a dramatic interruption at a concert at Toronto Harbourfront the following year when a violent thunderstorm erupted halfway through the set and audience and band were forced to flee as lightning struck during the encore.

A move to the island of Mull brought Martyn into contact with another free spirit, techno wizard Martin Low and they embarked on an album of hardcore music. That album *Hardland* was launched with a stunning set by his new band at the Saturday night climax of the 2000 Cambridge Folk Festival. The audience had been quietly slumbering after a gentle set by Joan Baez when Martyn and band arrived on stage all pipes blazing and almost took the roof of the tent off with their power and volume. The next day the album sold 1,000 copies on site – which still stands as a sales record for the festival.

Bennett was back with a vengeance and this time, we kept telling each other, it really was going to happen and he was heading for the big time. Even the cloth-eared mainstream rock industry couldn't fail to crumble before the might of tunes this exciting. Just a few weeks later Martyn was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

The next four years were a constant round of intensive chemo and major operations, which

sapped his body but never his spirit. In times of remission he continued to work, setting the singing of his mother Margaret Bennett over samples of the natural sounds and rhythms on the Isle of Skye on the charming *Glen Lyon* album. And then, in his darkest hour, perhaps his greatest achievement, *Grit*. He wasn't well enough to play on it and he must have known it was to be his last work – the title was itself a reference to the cancer inside him – and it was an album that took him full circle to the great Scottish singer he'd heard as a kid. Jeannie Robertson, Lizzie Higgins, Flora McNeil as nobody had ever heard them before surrounded by beats and squeaks which, far from swamping them, seem to breathe life into them.

It was an incredibly painful album for him to make, physically and spiritually, and he instinctively felt it was the best thing he'd done, though he was always wracked by doubt and self-recrimination. Living out those last days on Mull rejecting further treatment he grew ever more convinced that when it came to electronics v natural sounds, natural won every time. "I think it's great what you can do with electronics, but why twiddle with knobs when you could be twiddling with a fiddle peg or a woman's breast?" he said to me with that characteristic twinkle in his eye.

We've lost a very special musician... ☺

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Cook and sings opera with composer Christos Hatzis. *Book of Life* is Maryem's second CD of original music—diverse as the world we live in, as relevant as tomorrow's news. An epic tale of resistance in Gaza, the beauty of Montreal in autumn

written by an Arab traveler a hundred years ago, the sound of the women singers of the Mauritanian desert and a jaunty celebration of Maryem's love for her daughter—the songs are as diverse in their sources of inspirations as they are in their music. Jazz, world and pop influences combine to create a funky contemporary sound that is, at the same time, true to the traditional Arabic roots of many of the tunes.

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Michelle Shocked

The Penguin Eggs Interview

*Michelle Shocked just released three brand new rather good and heroically diverse albums simultaneously. Just take a look at this lot will you. The joyful, lighthearted *Got No Strings* takes the classic songs of Disney films and gift-wraps them in western swing. The more dramatic *Mexican Standoff* offers an invigorated amalgam of vein-bulging Texas blues and splendid Norteno border-ballads. And the sprawling roots-rock of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* will undoubtedly earn 'comeback' claims from more emotional journalists.*

*Michelle Shocked, though, never really went anywhere. She did have a serious spat with Mercury Records, which meant her recording career and early catalogue was left in limbo for several years. But she sued Mercury and won using the 13th Amendment, the reform abolishing slavery. Subsequently, she formed her own label, Mighty Sound, and now owns the masters to such big, impassioned discs as *Short, Sharp, Shocked*, featuring the hit *Anchorage*, and *Arkansas Traveler* – a wonderful retooling of American folk classics accompanied by her heroes Doc Watson, Norman Blake, Gatemouth Brown, Pop Staples and up-and-comers Alison Krauss and Uncle Tupelo.*

*Of course, Shocked's debut, *The Campfire Tapes*, is the stuff of legend. Recorded spontaneously by Englishman Pete Lawrence around a campfire at the Kerrville Festival in East Texas on a Sony Walkman, for little more than the cost of a pair of Duracell batteries and a C-90 cassette, it topped the independent charts in the UK in 1987. Lawrence had actually used it to launch his new label, Cooking Vinyl, only he didn't tell Michelle, then a full-time political activist living in a squat in New York. Indeed, the cover of *Short, Sharp, Shocked* is a front page newspaper photo of her being arrested at the Democratic Convention in San Francisco in 1984.*

Still, she did eventually come to terms with Lawrence and her newfound fame and really has never looked back. She did, however, recently divorce her husband of thirteen years.

*Shocked now lives in Los Angeles and recently earned a share of a Grammy for her collaboration with Pete Anderson, her long-time producer and guitarist for Dwight Yoakam, on a cover of *Oh Susannah* for the compilation *Beautiful Dreamer: The Songs of Stephen Foster*.*

Questions by Roddy Campbell.



Michelle Shocked

What sparked such a sudden surge of creativity?

I did this because I could. I've got all the freedom and creative control I could possibly want in one lifetime and I'm never lacking for ideas. But I'm obviously lacking in sound judgement. Good things come in threes, how about that? Honestly, I don't know; it's an instinct of mine. It reminds me very much of when terminally ill people have just a few months to live. They go through this thing, it's almost like a nesting instinct, they clear the decks so to speak. They get all the old business and loose ends tied up. They reorganise their closets and so forth and so on. and I have a sense I'm just moving on and up to other things. I needed to get all of this laid to rest. And probably the divorce had something to do with it don't you think?

Don't Ask, Don't Tell, the title track reminds me of the Uncle Remus and Brer' Rabbit folk tales.

It reminds me of that too. It does. It's kind of mysterious, a little surreal, and I guess, a little like that fiction that comes out of South America too.

I'm Hardly Going To Miss Him, a bit obvious isn't it?

I had the tune around for a while. But I've been able to function like a mighty editor. I've been able to go through my back catalogue, songs that I haven't recorded previously that were most appro-

priate for the sentiments I was trying to express, which are, by and large, personal ones regarding a failed relationship. But I would say also, the criteria has got to be a social one as well. In other words, I am very unhappy with the current political climate in my country. I wanted to have material that cut both ways, you know. So I could be talking about my ex-husband; I could be talking about my current president (she laughs).

Evacuation Route, the best song you have ever written?

I like telling stories that way – read between the lines. You kind of know I'm talking about divorce from a kid's point of view but you also have to wonder if that's what I'm talking about because I never really spell it out. I like it. It meets all of my criteria. I don't think I'll ever get out from under *Evacuation Route* in terms of a signature song. But in my mind *Evacuation Route* is truly the heart and soul of *Don't Ask, Don't Tell*. If it doesn't touch you in some tender sensitive place then I haven't done my job, right. And I think it does.

Goodbye starts with 'God be with you, God be with you.' You're quoted as having gone through a spiritual journey. Is there a connection?

I think connecting that particular 'God be with you' with my spiritual journey, for what it's worth, I consider myself a born again Christian.

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What brought that about?

It started with an exploration of gospel music, but also with a concern on my part that my liberal politics were not going to address segregation in any way. I would look out on my wonderful audiences and constantly be frustrated that it would never cross the colour barrier. So I decided I would go where the Black folk were. And I read that Sunday morning is the most segregated hours in America and that gave me the clue to go to a Black church. Of course, the music there is so wonderful and I think I went one Sunday too often, Rod. I think I did.

From Captain Swing to Arkansas Traveler you have always embraced musical diversity. What's the appeal?

I suppose I do have an agenda or a point to make. We don't ask our audiences to listen to one style or genre of music. But we can certainly ask artists. Everything I've experienced about being an artist tells me, my instincts tell me, that's a trap. It's a surefire recipe for artistic death or boredom. Having been inside the major label system, I understand why they urge that. They don't really have a great deal of interest in artists with longevity. For financial reasons, their best reward comes from artists that go very far very quickly and then burn out.

So I think part of my instinct is to create a cultural value for longevity; because, it's through longevity you can have a relationship with audiences. They can come to rely on your point of view when nothing else might make sense in their lives. And it's a valuable role for an artist to have as opposed to just selling records in a particular style. I think an artist needs to find a voice.

The journey to finding one's voice is far more interesting than playing a particular style or genre. With all respect to someone like Alison Krauss who started out with bluegrass and continues with bluegrass, within that small niche she has developed so much but our friends in Wilco are a much better example of an early conception of themselves and continued to expand. They just couldn't be contained within a box.

Pete Anderson once told me the thing he found fascinating about you was your introductions to songs – the story telling and humour largely found in the folk tradition.

I think I had real good influences growing up in Texas. My dad and his friends would get together on the weekend and play music. The songwriters they would choose always had quality to their song writing, whether it was John Prine or Randy Newman, Guy Clark and Townes Van Zandt. Paul Simon was more of a pop influence, I suppose. Also, my father was taking me to bluegrass festivals from the time I was twelve. There were a few bands like Hot Rize who made a point of introducing the songs like you would introduce a friend to somebody that didn't know them.



You recorded Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah on Arkansas Traveler. Was that the initial start to Got No Strings?

No. The decision to record *Got No Strings* was a result of a wonderful new relationship that came into my life with a painter [David Willardson] who, for many, many years, was involved with Disney's reissues of their animated songs. I don't think if it hadn't been for him I would have gone in that direction at all. He has a real understanding and appreciation for the roles that Disney characters communicate to people. And so I was able to see it through his eyes. We all have our relationships with the songs from Disney films. Mine was going at six-years-old to see Jungle Book for my birthday.

How did you go about picking the songs?

I worked with producer Nick Forester. We had a couple of criteria, like in the case of *Spoonful of Sugar*, we wanted to take something that, to our taste, was a little sappy, a little syrupy, and give it some grit. And then in a lot of cases we just wanted the ones that would adapt themselves to western swing.

Give me your sense of Mexican Stand Off

Of the three albums, it's the most complex. I guess that's natural since it's kind of two albums in one. I started a cycle of songs five or six years ago that was inspired by all the Spanish language around and realising it was far more ubiquitous and a part of my cultural vocabulary than I had acknowledged previously. So I wanted to document that. I'm not one of those Americans who are threatened by being bilingual.

What was your introduction to the blues?

That's like asking what was my introduction to water. You grow up in Texas and it's pretty much

all around you. I don't know. I found it to be the most satisfying and soulful expression of my feelings until I went a little bit further.

Was The Campfire Tapes released without your knowledge?

It was. I was living in a squat in New York when I got a note that my album was selling well in the independent charts in England. My response to the letter was, 'What album?' A friend came back from Amsterdam with a magazine and inside the magazine was an old flexi-disc. It said, 'Michelle Shocked'. And it said, 'Who Cares'. 'That's strange, I don't have a song called Who Cares.' But then I shoved it on my friends turntable and it was the song *Ghost Town* but on the introduction I'm saying, 'This is my most recent song and it's called, oh, who cares.'

What was it like making Arkansas Traveler with the likes of Doc Watson and Taj Mahal?

That was an amazing adventure. It brought me to a time in my life where everything that I had ever dreamed about artistically had already come true. Those people were such heroes of mine I had watched and witnessed from afar.

And to be right up close and personal, and trying to tune my guitar in the presence of Doc Watson, was excruciating. I remember when I first Norman Blake he said, 'Well, what do you want from an old hillbilly like me. I said, 'Norman you are my hero.'

Are you still politically active?

Absolutely. There's a group I love conspiring with when ever I get a chance called Code Pink. They are some hellraisers. I'm telling you, these gals do not quit. They don't care if there is 10 people or 10,000 people following in behind them. They will lead the charge into the most amazing

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places whether it is the Republican National Convention or Bush's inauguration, or at the Oscars – any opportunity that they can to make sure that Americans don't go down in history as good Germans in the face of this illegal occupation in Iraq. The record shows that this small committed group who stood up ever chance they had to say: 'Not in our name you don't.'

Who or what influences shaped your character?

My father, of course, deliberately influenced my brother and I, from a young age, to appreciate music that wasn't so mainstream or commercial. My mother I recently got back in touch with after 25 years silence, so I'm able to express a little more of my appreciation for the core values she instilled in us. I'm from a big family, not a lot of money. My ex-husband was an enormous influence on me. I

think anyone who has been through a marriage, whether it has succeeded or failed, knows that the effect that someone living that close to you can have. And finally as a good Christian I'm obligated to say that my life has been changed by the gospel of Christ and the things that he did to turn my life around. So I think that covers most of the bases wouldn't you say?



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Kiran Ahluwalia

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Dreamy and energetic music from the sub-continent by Indo-Torontonian Ahluwalia, who wraps her gently keening voice around a set of ghazals – a song form that falls between India's classical and popular musical traditions. Ahluwalia's vocals soar over a percolating backdrop of tabla and other percussion, harmonium and sard, but acoustic guitar and the fiddle's prowess of Natalie McMaster also crop up in the mix, intimating the singer's quest for a wider audience. Certainly the four and five-minute songs are more palatable to the neophyte, and Ahluwalia takes advantage of the varied settings to showcase her mesmerizing capabilities, which are unfailingly agile and discerning. It will be interesting to see where she takes her music next.

– By Scott Lingley

Altan

Local Ground
Narada

What can you say about Altan that hasn't been said

before? Not much. And in most respects, *Local Ground* is pretty much like any other Altan record. As always, the focus is firmly on tunes and songs from the Irish tradition, delivered with jaw-dropping skill and spirit. And while the whole disc is consistently excellent, there are some highlights: three beautiful and distinctive highlands characteristic of the band's Donegal roots; a striking version of *The Wind and Rain* (with a nod to Jody Stecher); and the closing track, *Diún do shúil*, a simple and plaintive lullabye that brings a tear to my eye each time I hear it. Seriously good stuff. *Local Ground* it may be, but the connection is universal.

– By Richard Thornley

Genticorum

Malins Plaisirs
Roues et Archets

Love lost, love and lust, and 'cousinage' (I'll leave it to your imagination). As if the album's name and the bitten apple on the cover isn't enough to tip you off, 'l'amour' in its many forms is a dominant theme throughout Genticorum's second album. And cats. At

least three of the tunes are titled after cats. So with their sense of fun firmly intact, the three members of Genticorum take us on another trip through Quebec's rich musical traditions. We are treated to some wonderful songs and 'complaintes', cracking sets of tunes, and some innovative instrumental touches, such as the nyckelharpa on *Bonnet d'âne* and the bass-o-tronic backdrop to *Cascou*. As we've said so many times in these pages, there's tons of young groups coming out of Quebec these days. Genticorum are one of the best.

– By Richard Thornley

Monsieur Lambert et Compagnie

Récidive
La prûche libre

The big man is back, le bonhomme, the voice! Yves Lambert, known to us as the front man of La Bottine Souriente for so many years, is back with his first album (his second solo effort) after leaving that group in 2002. And what a disc. It sounds like a group effort, with Lambert joined by a who's who of Quebec musicians, and covers a lot of stylistic ground. There's a collaboration with middle eastern musicians (*À l'abri des bombes*), rock bombast (*Rwita*), the a capella *Papa mignon*, and other pieces, such as *Hommage à Tico Petit*, that could have come from the pre-brass LBS days. Lambert sounds relaxed, like he's having more fun than he's had in some time (certainly more fun than I suspect he had on his last LBS disc, the uninspiring *Cordial*) and there's a rare warmth to the recording

that makes it a must-have for all fans of music from la belle province.

– By Richard Thornley

Martin Simpson

Kind Letters
Topic Records

Martin Simpson's 13th release, *Kind Letters*, is no cause for superstition. With reverence to the roots, pioneers and contemporaries of traditional English folk songs Simpson marries his flawless guitar playing with erudite instrumentation to sing us into folk worlds long gone. Infidelity, slavery, piracy, poverty, love and death all make starring appearances with no shortage of standout performances and epic screenplays.

One such blockbuster is *The Flying Cloud* featuring the confessional tale of Arthur Hollandene. While awaiting the gallows he laments his misguided allegiance with a certain Captain Moore who takes him from his village onto the plague infested ship of the African slave trade where pirating and eventual Spanish capture brings him to his short life's reflective coda. Whew, great stuff! This album is a real page-turner.

Here's Adieu Sweet Lovely Nancy is the marriage proposal and loves enduring, hopeful promise from a departing wartime sailor to his sweet heart. The story unfolds with the perfect entrances of cello, whistle, fiddle and bodhran displaying Martin's cinematic compositional poise. At this point of the review it must be mentioned that none other than Danú, one of Ireland's finest young traditional groups, provide this superb backing on several tracks.

A couple of well-timed instrumentals provide the necessary intermissions without the need for popcorn.

Bareback to Bullhassock is a joyous duet with master accordionist Chris Parkinson in which Martin's self-penned sweetly loping jig dips fleetingly into a startling cut time jig. The second, *A Blacksmith Courted Me*, reveals shimmering slide guitar with the beguiling fiddle of Nancy Kerr to evoke a suspended state of yearning and contemplation.

Martin Simpson's album *Kind Letters* projects the stellar tales of the 'heart illuminate' through his crystal guitar playing, a brilliant album.

– By David Ross MacDonald



Yves Lambert

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THE SUNTIMES

Bruce Power



Labatt Good things brewing.





Caitlin Cary & Thad Cockrell

Caitlin Cary & Thad Cockrell

Begonias
Yep Roc

Rather appropriate, there is mention on this disc of John and June as the voices of Caitlin and Thad sound as though they belong together. Within the first listen I was lulled into a sense of familiarity. The melodies, the lyrics, the voices all timeless without being cliché. It may sound a little over praising but there is a bit of an early Winchester, Lightfoot or Parsons feel about the writing.

No boundary stretching really but don't let that be considered a criticism. Every once in a while a collection of songs comes around that need nothing more than to exist to be good. I guarantee you'll be singing along after two or three listens and you won't realize that it's only been that long.

— By Chris Martin

Ryan Adams & The Cardinals

Cold Roses
Lost Highway

No-one's denying that Ryan Adams has talent. Ever since the days of Whiskeytown he's been writing the sweetest melodies and the prettiest songs. But he's also a victim of his own productivity. With seven albums out in the last five years and two more slated for later this year, he needs to learn how to edit.

The latest, *Cold Roses*, has flashes of the brilliance he showed with *Heartbreaker*, his solo debut, as well as the wretched excess that marred the last few records. But there is hope. He's assembled a great band, the Cardinals, to back him up. Those melodies are turning up more regularly. It would seem he's been listening to Neil Young and Steve Earle, and it's rubbed off. Uneven as it is, this is still his best work since *Heartbreaker*. Songs like *Sweet Illusion* and *Let it Ride*, as well as the amazing resonator guitar work of Cindy Cashdollar, signal a return to the right path.

— By Shawna Biamonte

Mary Gauthier

Mercy Now
Lost Highway

Mercy Wow! We can all use a little mercy from Gauthier! A brilliant album, filled with musical gems that echo the pain and hardship of the American working class! Compared possibly to John Prine without the satire, but with the gloom of Morrissey, this album works on all levels. The lyrics are filled with a richness and depth that are like snapshots that achingly capture the hard life of some one who has lost it all and is putting it back together. Gauthier's voice is distinctive and combined with her powerful and convincing delivery makes you feel her anguish. The

varied instrumentation and unique arrangements are persuasive and strong throughout. *Mercy Now* is destined to be in the year's top ten. Like one very sad and beautiful story, each song is a unique tale on its own: no glorification of trailer park life here — just sheer, honest emotion, told from the heart to the heart.

— By Philip Harries

Blue Rodeo

Are You Ready
Wea/Warner Music

Are You Ready won't win any prizes for its cover art — a crappy 1960s painting, bargain-bin school of design. That's probably intentional though. Blue Rodeo have that well-constructed, solid pop craftsmanship of that time period, too, especially on this new disc. There's up-tempo pop energy, represented by *Can't Help Wondering Why*, *Are You Ready* and *Up On That*

Cloud. There's also pop ballads, such as *Rena, I Will*, *Finger Lakes*, and *Stuck On You*. The Keelor/Cuddy songwriting team really has that pop form, tinged with Americana/Country down pat. That's not a put-down. They have kept the proceedings lean and focused, the solos and embellishments tight and succinct. There's nothing that doesn't need to be there to put the song across. It reminds me both of how much craft it takes to put across a good three or four minute pop song and how much it can hold if you keep things moving. They even branch out into shades of English folk on *Phaedra's Meadow* and the 60's note is struck again in the finale on *Tired of Pretending*, where trumpet invokes soul. Good solid stuff.

— By Barry Hammond

Greg Keelor

Seven Songs For Jim
Wea/Warner Music

Blue Rodeo's Greg Keelor takes time out from the band on this disc to both mourn and eulogize his father, Jim, who died in 2003. It's a heartfelt work, designed to evoke that heavy sadness of silver suns and gray skies, where: "I would give anything just to be with you, now, somewhere beyond the distance of your cloudy gray eyes." It's a disc of heavy atmospherics, designed for the listener to sit down and cry. The most upbeat thing is the

sweet, uplifting guitar chords in *Morning Dove*. It reminds me somewhat of Old Reliable's disc *The Gradual Moment*, where band member Mark Davis penned a similar tribute to his girlfriend's struggle with breast cancer and her premature death at age 31. When bad stuff happens to musicians, they have to go through the process and get it out of their systems. You can't really criticize them for that. Generally, it produces greater depth in future songs.

— By Barry Hammond

Les Cowboys Fringants

La Grand-Messe
La Tribu

Neo-folk, country-punk, or perhaps Québécois-trad-pop, Les Cowboys Fringants are doubtlessly the most popular roots act in Québec. I saw them on the third night of three sold out shows in Québec City, where hundreds of riled up teenagers danced furiously and sang along. *La Grand-Messe* belies a fourth album maturity — it's more dynamic and interestingly arranged than their earlier albums, featuring more than ever before the multi-instrumental and



Mary Gauthier

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Frank Maher

arranging talents of the violin, piano, accordion, and mando playing Marie-Annick. Themes that recur on the album are politics, the apocalypse, and songs about bizarre characters.

Borrowing sounds from traditional French Canadian music, Les Cowboys create original compositions that are rooty yet very much engaged with modernity. They don't even need to sing at their shows because everyone knows all the words. Energetic, creative, and political, Les Cowboys Fringants make traditional music cool and r-

– By Mary Beth Carty

Veda Hille

Return of the Kildeer
Ball of Flames Productions

The star of listenable art music, Veda Hille could be the subject of an art school student's masters thesis. This collection of songs, which I'm assuming is a conceptual one, is representative (I think) of some kind of rural coming-of-age story. She uses a vast variety of sounds, mostly acoustic, yet never bombards us. This disc is intellectual and experimental, without sacrificing emotion and pleasantness. In her poetry she borrows from everyday speech and concrete events, and at times, is inspired by old folk songs. Many of the songs are

creepy little lullabies, some even contain the F-word, an interesting contrast. My favorite song is called *Frank Mills*. It's unusual, yearning, and funny. *Return of the Kildeer* contains beautiful melodies and memorable lines. It's conceptual without being pretentious. I like it.

– By Mary Beth Carty

Melwood Cutlery

Campfire
Borealis

Every guy with a guitar singing folksy kinda country tunes hates to be compared to Bob Dylan. But hey, tough pal! There is a twinge of Bob, a smidge of Tom Petty, heck Melwood could have easily fit into The Travelling Wilburys. The songwriting is as rich, the melodies as strong and the voice as true as anything the supergroup had released. In fact with such a stellar cast of Canadian country folks guesting – Lynn Miles, Jenny Whiteley, David Francey, Terry Tufts, and Taylor Floodgate – Melwood leads a supergroup of his own complete with a solid studio and road worthy crew. Every now and then a disc comes along from a mainstay artist that is more than just a recording for recording's sake. Though a year in the making,

Campfire has the feel of an album that was made for a

reason by like-minded artists with an understanding of where the songwriter was coming from. This kind of music is not ground breaking but this disc will be a lasting one for Melwood Cutlery.

– By Chris Martin

Frank Maher & The Mahers Bahers

Mahervelous!
Borealis Records

A new CD from a Newfoundland legend, fine melodeon player and former Fiddly Duff member. It's full of bouncy melodies and quirky humour. Right off the top Frank rips into *Bonnie Kate* and *The Cuckoo's Nest* displaying customary vivacity and nimble-fingeredness. Then there's the off-the-wall lunacy of *Frank's Famous Non-Rhyming Limerick*.

Other highlights are the comic ditty *Miss Gilhooley's Party* which is interspersed with various rambunctious tunes, and Frank's signature tune *Running the Goat*. He is accompanied throughout by the wittily named Mahers Bahers. Christina Smith contributes zesty fiddle, Jean Hewson keeps everything rocking along with some punchy rhythm guitar playing and is helped out in the groove department on some tracks by Rick West's sturdy bodhran playing. A really enjoyable romp with one of the Rock's finest.

Maria McKee Peddlin' Dreams

Eleven Thirty Records
Her vocals reek of Broadway. Full of cheesy, conventional love-song lyrics like 'Does she trace my kisses on the parchment of your face,' too loud electric guitar licks and drums, and power-ballad melodrama. The back cover of the promo copy says that she 'has been feted as the queen of alt-country.' There is nothing alt or country about Maria McKee, except one

song about a horse and a cover of Neil Young's *Barstool Blues*.

– By Mary Beth Carty

The Cameron Family Singers

Saturday Matinee

Camfam Records

Not exactly sure how these singers are related – inbred, illegitimate, second cousins perhaps? The proof is here that just because you CAN record your weekly jam session doesn't mean you SHOULD. The Cameron House in Toronto has (or had) quite a decent reputation as a proving ground for performers wanting a place on the stages of the Big Smoke (at least I thought it did). The presence of a tune called *God's Thresher* begs the question: could any of these people actually point out a thresher in a line up of machinery at the next farm bankruptcy auction?

– By Chris Martin

Rae Spoon

Your Trailer Door
Independent

Rae Spoon is lost in a rural world of trailers, thrashers, and grain elevators. His voice is certainly rare, and dips and sways like an old-time wagon ride. His banjo playing has improved, but lacks grit. In fact, most of the album lacks grit. In *Rapture* the last and most gritty track, Rae cuts loose and we see

his rollicking side - if only it had come earlier in the album!

The rest is more cute than heartfelt, and the mixing, like the first album, is a bit off. The instruments are too quiet, I can't hear them when I'm listening to my Walkman on a crowded street. I do like the minimalist instrumental approach, and she's got some really sweet backup vocalists on here, namely Awna Teieira and Allison Russell. I hope the next album has a different producer.

– By Mary Beth Carty

Linton Kwesi Johnson

Live in Paris with the Dennis Bovell Dub Band
Wrasse Records/ BMG

For most, reggae music is Bob Marley or Peter Tosh, but it's like pop, diverse with many sub genres. Before Marley, there was rock steady, ska and later dub. Linton Kwesi Johnson has been touted as the grandfather of Jamaican dub. A celebrated and internationally recognized poet and teacher; he is an icon in Jamaican Dub and poetry. *Live in Paris* with the Dennis Bovell Dub Band is a collec-



Rae Spoon

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tion of 25 years of Johnson's best, brilliantly captured live. The songs and music flow as strong as his message of oppression and inequality. The high point is when Johnson rhymes a capella *Di Great Insohreckshan* to a cheering audience. You get a real sense of the power of voice, rhyme and timing that he commands. This album captures the heart and meaning of what reggae should be.

— By Philip Harries

Loudon Wainwright III

In "Here Come the Choppers!"
Sovereign Artists

In preparing to bang off your new album in four days – even if it is your 28th – you'd do well to follow Loudon Wainwright III's example and round up the crackest crack squad of sidemen you can find. In his case, Wainwright chose Bill Frisell, Greg Leisz, David Piltch and Jim Keltner – players so sharp you need to listen to what they're doing half a dozen times to realize how perfect it is. Wainwright's pretty sharp himself, maybe too sharp, needling most of his song subjects, from the large admirer of his opening track (*My Biggest Fan*) to his grandfather and namesake

(*Half Fist*), and the copier patrols over Los Angeles. Frisell's wailing guitar touches provide a mellow counterpoint, and songs like *When You Leave* are a heartfelt counterpoint to the heapin' helpin' of sardonic observations. If that sounds like your cup of tea, you'll find Wainwright turning in terrific vocal performances on every track.

— By Scott Lingley

The Big Session

Volume 1

Oysterband
Westpark Music

The Big Session was recorded live on 18-20 May 2004 with a small audience at Bush Hall, London. It features Oysterband with an all star cast including Phil Beer and Steve Knightley (*Show of Hands*), Eliza Carthy, Ben Ivensky and June Tabor. The intent was to capture the feel of an after-hours session with the emphasis on spontaneity. The material is varied, ranging from traditional chestnuts like *John Barleycorn* to originals like Eliza Carthy's *Fuse* to pop songs like Joy Division's *Love Will Tear us Apart*. The performances are all very strong with a few off the wall surprises such as Handsome Family's Brett and Rennie Sparks' version of *The House Carpenter*.

This is one of the best folk/roots/rock CDs I've heard in ages. Get it while it's fresh!!

— By Tim Readma

Radio Tarifa

Fiebre
World Circuit

Derbuka, plato, pandereta, neys and the deliciously named crumhorn are some of the exotic instruments to be heard on this wonderful live recording from Spain's Radio Tarifa.

The rise of Galician groups has thrown the music of southern Spain a bit into the shadow in recent years, but one listen to *Fiebre* (*Fever*) and you may well be re-enthused about flamenco and its attendant influences, particularly the North African tradition.

Radio Tarifa live make kinetic, exotic music. These fabulous musicians have worked out arrangements that are intricate and pulsating, full of hot playing, never excessive, but exuberant and inventive to be sure. Thrilling, dynamic and sensitive, *Fiebre* is a knockout recording from a very talented band.

— By David Ingram

Danú

When All Is Said And Done
Shanachie

Vibrant, pulsating tunes and beautiful songs are Danú's hallmark, and on this album we hear yet more of their high calibre repertoire. Reels, barn dances, marches, airs, jigs and hornpipes, this superb Irish septet tackles them all with enthusiasm, skill, and that elusive magic touch, playing for each other and for the love of the music.

There's sweep and grandeur to the arrangements, massive skills in the playing, and lashings of lift when their whistles, fiddles, flutes, accordion, guitar, bouzouki and bodhrán combine for a rich yet clear sound. Muireann, awesome on the tender *An Caillín Deas Crúite na mBó*, is one of the most engaging singers around, and shines whether dipping into her Kerry songbag or updating songs from Paul Brady and Bob Dylan.

The closing set is *I'll Mend Your Pots and Kettles*, and in truth Danú will also mend your troubles and your heartaches with this cracking album.

— By David Ingram

P:ano

Brigadoon
Mint Records

Or Everything I Know About Pop Music, I Learned in High School Band. The Brian Wilson approach to arranging has been heavily copied as a vocal style, but Vancouver's P:ano manage to muster his instrumental spirit, building their songs out of sunny piano and horns, antique keyboards, and galloping effects-laden percussion that sounds like kettle drums, bolstering the melodious, naïve-sounding vocals. And like Wilson, songwriter/vocalist Nick Kravitz knows how to be succinct, plying his novel hooks in two and three-minute bursts. Even better he knows to supplement his voice with female co-singers and gang-vocal choruses. Through 22 tracks, the sheer cleverness starts to cloy a

touch, but the songs do stick in your head all the same.

— By Scott Lingley

Shooglenifty

Live: Radical
Mestizo
Shooglenifty Records

The Funky String Band

Mongrel
Unleashed
Shooglenifty Records

Shooglenifty live are a revelation.

While on record, they can sound a touch cold and restrained. In front of an audience, they are anything-but-totally riveting, exhorting the crowd to dance, and fronted by the wildman persona of Angus Grant. *Radical Mestizo* captures Shooglenifty in full flight in Mexico City, Glasgow, Bloomington, and Glenugie. While most of the tunes don't deviate hugely from their studio versions, the listening is good and it's impressive to see that the group can pull the music off in front of a live audience. The main disappointment is the album's heavy emphasis on material from their 2003 album, *The Arms Dealer's Daughter*, which is reproduced here almost in its entirety. While that was easily the group's best album to date, it would have been nice to hear some more radical reworkings of their repertoire, and less emphasis on recent material. Still, as live albums go, this one is well worth chasing down.

However, for the cash-strapped Shooglenifty fan, the more essential purchase has to be *The Funky String Band's* second album. Peter Daffy and Luke Plumb were the group's original members, releasing their debut album in Australia in 2001. Shortly thereafter Plumb joined Shooglenifty and has



Oysterband

played with them ever since. *Mongrel Unleashed* finds Messrs. Plumb and Daffy reunited, singing and playing banjo, guitar, mandolin, bouzouki, and ukulele. Angus Grant joins in on fiddle and vocals. As befits the title, the CD is a mixed basket, from Randy Newman and Alan Toussaint covers to traditional and original tunes. While the songs are merely fun, the real interest here is in the melodic heart of Shooglenifty performing tunes in an almost-entirely acoustic setting. And in parts it's even a little funky.

— By Richard Thorlsey

The Rembetika Hipsters

Dinner in Poldiroso
Socrates Pizza Records

Drawing on a musical form that sprang from Greece's urban ghettos in the early 20th century on which

all kinds of Greek popular music is based, Calgary's Rembetika Hipsters adapt a passionate, plaintive and complex music without losing the dirt under its fingernails. The swirling minor melodies, hand percussion and distinctive bouzouki belie the influence of Turkish music on rembetika, which is in full evidence on the album opener, *Melina's Bath pt.1*. Elsewhere the gruff-but-plaintive vocals of Nick Diochnos and Allen Baekeland impart the melancholy of the lyrics (handily translated for you in the booklet). What's really remarkable is most of the songs were written by the band, who also chip in ac-cordion, violin, clarinet, and various bouzouki-related devices. Authentic? Beats me. Soulful and accomplished? You bet.

— By Scott Lingley

Al Tuck

33 1/3
Independent

Nova Scotia's unsung hero Al Tuck, releases his fourth album with *33 1/3*. It is a charming compilation of in-

teresting and humorous songs that run the gamut from 'boy meets girl, boy loses girl' with a satirical twist to catchy and intriguing blues. Tuck's skilful instrumentation and musical arrangements work well with his carefree vocalization and moves steadily from beginning to end, leaving you with a smile on your face.

— By Philip Harries

Shiftless Rounders

Ghost in the Radio
Growlin and Grublin
Records

I used to think the ultimate in band composition was the illustrious power trio: guitar, bass, and drums. If so few people could make that much sound, it had to be good. When all of a sudden what do I hear in The Shiftless Rounders, two, count 'em, two guys. Mind you they do focus their musicality around banjo and Dobro and that's a lot of resonance to fill the air.

Like all types of music, bluegrass augt to move forward. The purists out there who feel that there is only

one way to do things are doing their favourite pastime a real disservice. Phill Wisor and Ben Sideler of the Rounders have a solid base in their bluegrass/mountain music expression and they are translating that into some vibrant new material. How can you argue with them when the sole addition to their playing and voices is a clarinet in Wisor's *Big Round Moon*. Is the clarinet a traditional bluegrass instrument? Who cares, it sounds cool! And it sure adds the blue to the grass.

— By Chris Martin

Orchid Ensemble

Road To Kashgar
Independent

Like the silk road of the title, the sound of Orchid Ensemble freely crosses all kinds of borders. While the sound is ostensibly Chinese, the group seems increasingly influenced by their concerts with other world music artists, incorporating classical Indian (Bengalila) and South American sounds (Yaribon). The group regularly commissions pieces by contemporary composers,

and sometimes end up sounding like a free-form jazz trio. Mix that all together and what do you get? A surprisingly coherent and listenable record. Somehow they create a fullness of sound missing from a lot of traditional Asian music, even as they refuse to be pigeonholed as world music. Whatever it is, it's lovely and well-deserving of the Juno nomination this album garnered them.

— By Shawna Biamonte

Blind Boys of Alabama

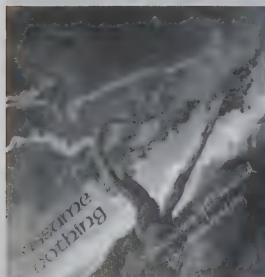
Atom Bomb
Real World

This group has been around since the thirties, but had a stunning revival in 2001 with their blend of blues, gospel, and soul. They've been nudging their way closer to pop music with every album since, culminating in *Atom Bomb*, which is filled with loops, raps, soul and funk. Definitely the most high-energy recording yet, this one also takes more risks, like the cover of Fatboy Slim and Macy Gray's *Demons*.



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Rodney Brown

Fortunately it pays off; this is one of their best. In what has become the group signature sound, blending gospel tunes with contemporary beats, they transform songs like *Old Blind Barnabas* and *Presence of the Lord* from mournful old chestnuts to fresh and funky hymns. If you've shied away from gospel music for fear of being preached to, try this. You'll like it.

— By Shawna Biamonte

Mercan Dede

Su
Escondida

In an era when the TV media feeds us a diet of bland reductions instead of rich diversity, is it any surprise the Islamic world is monolithically portrayed as the lands that joy forgot? Meanwhile, 13th century Sufi mystic, Rumi is currently the best-selling poet in North America and the soaring vocals of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan are familiar to anyone who has rented Bend It Like Beckham. Like Rumi and Nusrat, Mercan Dede contributes a necessary corrective to the FOX News worldview. A Turkish born Sufi adherent, trained in multimedia in Saskatoon, this sometime Montreal resident combines elements of traditional Turkish Sufi music with contemporary electronica. Clearly at ease

working across cultures, Dede chooses his collaborators broadly — among them, singer Susheela Ramen, sitarist Sheema Mukherjee and Canadian electric violinist Hugh Marsh. Lush and ethereal, the contemplative compositions on Su will appeal to fans of World Fusion / Trance projects such as Afro-Celt Sound System and Trans-Global Underground.

— By Gallagher Parkinson

Russell Marsland

Dig Deep
(Independent)

Marsland's a supremely talented vocalist regardless of what style of music he applies it to. Kicking off with a supercharged remake of *Hoochie Coochie Man*, Marsland does what so few have — updating the original with boundless energy and an exciting, percussive, sax-stacked arrangement that smacks of funk. There is more great blues: Warsaw Blues and the seductive instrumental, *Mississippi Home Made Jam*. But he doesn't continue in this vein, the album stalling as it changes gears. Great songs abound: like *The Belly Of A Whale*, the slick and soulful *In Good Hands* and the powerful *Lay Your Head* — all held together by Marsland's lush vocals and lavish production. Yet this release is devoid of focus.

Take the confusing Tom Waits meets Ziggy Stardust on *Sylviah* — great music but who really is Russell Marsland? Talented in spades but in dire need of direction.

— By Eric Thom

Little Freddie King

You Don't Know What I Know
Fat Possum Records

Originally fashioning himself after the 'less little' Freddie King, LFK brings you original Delta country blues via the inspiration of New Orleans, where he has been based since leaving Mississippi in 1954. His raspy blues is authentic as he has lived the life; his bio reads like wild fiction. Eight of 11 tracks are LFK originals while three are the 'other' Freddie's originals yet the overpowering sensation here is an original blues man, informed by everybody from Slip Harpo to Chuck Berry, (cousin) Lightnin' Hopkins and a liberal dose of N'awlins mojo. On his own, tracks such as *You Rascal You* reveal him as pawnshop raw while full band tracks like the Fat Possum-ized *Looking for my Woman* are rhythm-packed and bursting with life — he hangs on to you like Spanish moss. LFK may have had more bullets than hits but what's left of Freddie is authentic, emotion-packed and well worth your discovery.

— By Eric Thom

Rodney Brown And The Northern Roots Band

The Big Lonely
Starsilk Records

I personally love songwriters who attempt to write Canadian History in song. They are doing God's work in Canadian folk music. So, if like me, you like your folk music fairly traditional and always wanted to know a bit more about the fur trade in North West Ontario than

your high school history classes taught you — then this is the record for you. Historical notes on all ten songs flesh out Rodney Brown's story of what the voyageurs called the "Big Lonely." It's obviously a work sprung from a passion for the history of the area Rodney lives in. Kudos for sharing a lovely piece of work with us all.

— By les siemieniuk

Pierre Bensusan

Altiplanos
Favored Nations

Altiplanos is not your average guitar record, folk record, or new age sojourn; nor does it seem an attempt to cover a number of genres in the hopes of being something for everyone. Yet, I cannot imagine a flag bearer from any one of these camps who could give this a quick listen and set it aside for a rainy day; it's that good. Always full of surprises, Bensusan pushes the envelope once more with a tender-sweet musical treatise that cajoles as well as calms. His voice is used to great effect on this recording, both as instrument and lyrical vehicle, and the range of emotion he achieves on the instrument is only slightly shadowed by the techniques employed to achieve them (the guitarists

out there will either be inspired or frightened). This record is a monumental achievement; one that will surely set its place in musical history.

— By Del Vezeau

Jack Johnson

In Between
Dreams
Brushfire Records

Back in 1999 when I started college, dorm rooms were burgeoning with the sounds of amateur musicians covering Dave Matthews and Ben Harper. I wouldn't be surprised if, today, I walked down some residence halls to hear the sounds of Jack Johnson covers. His acoustic music has a simple yet beautiful quality that lends itself to being a young guitar player's muse. I would be no more surprised to hear this album at a backyard summer barbecue, given its laid-back grooviness. Jack Johnson's vocals are as sweet and unforced as Ben Harper's, and he does a similar singing/rapping mix (or mouth-music, perhaps?) as G-Love and Special Sauce. The music is nicely produced, with an intimate, nat-



Mercan Dede

ural, sound (but for some reason reminds my of Marcy Playground). Listening to *In Between Dreams*, I can almost imagine that Jack Johnson is an old friend singing on the beach after an all-night party, a few djembés and shakers tippity-tapping and shkity-shaking away.

Jack Johnson's third album is as sunny and organic as the cover art, and worth owning, if melodic-yet-rappy-acoustic-groove is what you need. And I'm sure his tune *Good People* was written with no knowledge of the Sam Roberts hit (they must have been drinking the same water...probably from the lake where all the good people went).

— By Mary Beth Carty

The MayKings

7Yrs

Independant

This alt-country Alberta

group has a lo-fi, indie-rock sound and sing in nazaly, by-all-standards-crappy voices (which I like anyways the way people like Bob Dylan's voice). The sound is a cross between early 80s R.E.M. and country music. These, are the reasons I find this disc somewhat tolerable. But these, are also the reasons why many will hate it.

— By Mary Beth Carty

Sonny Landreth

Grant Street

Sugar Hill Records

For his first live disc, slide guitar virtuoso Sonny Landreth returns to the Grant Street Dancehall in Lafayette, Louisiana, a venue he once opened with zydeco king Clifton Chenier. With his power trio of David Ranson on bass and Kenneth Blevins on drums, Landreth bulldozes his way through the best of his previous eight albums plus three new songs:

Port Of Calling, Wind In Denver, and Pedal To Metal. It's Duane Allman meets Jimi Hendrix, meets Stevie Ray Vaughan at a slide-infested, heavy-metal zydeco dance. Eric Clapton has said, 'He's probably the most underesti-

mated musician on the planet and also probably one of the most advanced.' If you want to hear what all the fuss is about this disc is a good sampler of his technique, with all the added energy of a hard rocking live date.

— By Barry Hammond.

Shona Le Mottée

Destination Grouville Jersey Girl

Fiddle ace Shona Le Mottée has played with The Paperboys, Fear of Drinking, Mad Pudding, and Tim Readman, and also toured with Lord of the Dance

The solo *Destination Grouville* (a town on her native Isle Of Jersey), is packed with skirling sets of Cape Breton and Irish tunes. Finbar Dwyer's, *Daldwyn's, Exile Erin, Bog An Lochan Jan* and the title track are hot stuff indeed. Five tunes are her own, with *Last Night's Dream* an energizing opener, *Red Gloves* a lively dance piece, and *Blood from Stone* a touching, melancholy air.

There are three songs too, featuring Shona's soft voice blending well with Tim's Geordie grit. Readman pro-

duced the disc, and leads an excellent group of musicians laying down bewitching grooves for the Jersey girl's spirited fiddle.

This is an enjoyable album from the very talented Ms Le Mottée.

— By David Ingram

Reckless Kelly

Wicked Twisted Road Sugarhill

Whoever decided to categorize this band as alt.country is a confused S.O.B. The airbrushed photo taken in front of a curtain on the cover is telling; this band is too polished to be alt. The Austin, Texas group's fifth album contains some folk and classic rock elements but it never strays too far from sounding like a new-country record.

— By Chris Martin

Jennifer Cutting

Ocean

SunSign Records

Jennifer Cutting's own compositions, some Irish standards and a few numbers from Bach and Holst make up the lushly layered music of *Ocean*. She plays key-

boards, but is principally musical director for a huge roster of musicians engaged for these uptown orchestral treatments of Celtic musical motives.

Most tracks are songs, some lyrics are Jennifer's, others gleaned from alchemical axioms, hymns, and an old German text. Grace Griffith delivers solid vocals, as does Maddy Prior and Polly Bolton. Short bits of accordion, fiddle and pipes are largely enveloped by waves of sound, blending with the words to support a subtext of a sea crossing as voyage of discovery.

Ocean is not so much meat and potatoes Irish, but more a rich desert that pays tribute to an old tradition.

— By David Ingram

Jorge Miguel

Flamenco

Andaluz Music AM 1004

Toronto-based guitarist Jorge Miguel extends his repertoire beyond the usual flamenco pyrotechnics. De Cadiz is a lovely jazz-drenched number with Miguel's guitar rolling above Paul Donat's round and melancholy double bass.



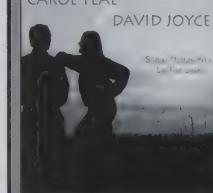
Michael Johnston Curious Heart

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Eilana Cuevas' matter-of-fact alto voice helps propel the energetic rumba of *Gitanita*. And Palo Seco is a Shakti-influenced, East Indian style rip featuring a lightening fast percussion and vocal duo.

That said, Miguel's album is, after all, titled *Flamenco*, so you can expect plenty of the Spanish guitar music. Even so, many of Miguel's lines are reminiscent of jazz guitarist Larry Coryell's, ascending repeats winding around Donat's bass and Daniel Stone's rock-steady percussion. Unlike many flamenco recordings, content to recycle clichés, Miguel's *Flamenco* shows a lively mind at work whose willingness to experiment is matched with careful instrumental technique.

— By Charles Mandel

La Bottine Souriente

Jai Jamais Tant Ri Mille-Pattes

La Bottine Souriente will put a shiny smile on your boots with yet another release packed with great dance numbers. There's a relentless party atmosphere created on *Jai Jamais Tant Ri (I Never Laughed So Much)*, a bushel of bonbons from the bon-vivants of La Belle Province. The songs are full of wit and whimsy, interspersed with strong tunes featuring fiddle, accordion, bouzouki, a bouncing bass, and bold, occasionally raucous brass.

A healthy irreverence glows through the songs, with subjects as varied as the tale of a priest's cook, a backpackers knapsack full of troubles, a rake's lack of progress, a young man's delight at being single, a monk's frustration at not managing to break his vows of celibacy, a party-pooper's unfortunate evening, a widower's joyous relief, and a baker's successful recipe for snaring her man.

Upbeat and uplifting, La



Old Reliable

Bottine's music is a celebration of the humour and vibrancy of everyday life, so no grand themes here, but lots and lots of fun. C'est magnifique.

— By David Ingram

Matt Mays & El Torpedo

Self Titled
Sonic Records

Following the 2004 East Coast Music Association New Artist distinction, Matt Mays has collaborated his efforts with El Torpedo for their first self-titled release. The album features fourteen Matt Mays songs and includes guest appearances from Kathleen Edwards, Kate Maki and Dale Murray. It is a strong collection of edgy, hard-hitting rock songs with catchy guitar riffs.

— By Philip Harries

Jaime RT

Reach
Dog My Cat Records

Reach the debut recording of Canadian fiddler Jaime RT features a number of well-known Canadian players: John Reishman, Adrian Dolan, Glen Manders, Andy Hillhouse and fellow fiddler Oliver Schroer. *Reach* showcases Jaime RT's fiddling as well as her compelling composition skills. The tunes are

well arranged and give RT a chance to highlight her ability on both the fiddle and viola. Her writing style is a mixture of modern Celtic and Bluegrass with a bit of Indian tabla thrown into the mix. Many tracks feature multi-layered fiddle and viola parts, which give the album a certain richness but this effect also exposes a bit of stiffness in the phrasing of the melodies. The album has a few stand out tunes such as *Dragonfly*, *Skittles at Buckley Bay* & *Mischief in the Garden* and *Les Patates Brulles* medley, a fine tribute to Emile Benoit which features some melody playing by Dolan & Hillhouse.

— By Dan Campbell

Old Reliable

The Burning Truth
Saved By Radio

Anchored by the usual exceptional songwriting of Shuyler Jansen and Mark Davis, teamed with the guitar and vocals of Shawn Jonasson, rounded out by Scott Lingley and Tom Murray this is a powerful and rocking record. Mastered in Austin, Texas, which may account for the crunching extra bite in the guitar and bass sound, the swirling jet engine keyboards, and crisp drums this time out, or maybe the boys

are just getting better and better. The tunes come thick and fast: *The Burning Truth*, *Before U C Me Explode*, *Thoroughbred*, *Standing On Earth Tonight*, *Out On The Line*, *Bride*. There's nothing weak-sounding on this disc at all. Put it in a mix with other discs and each song easily stands on its own merit. This may be Old Reliable's strongest collection yet.

— By Barry Hammond

Coope Boyes and Simpson

Triple Echo
No Masters

For only their second foray into traditional music, the acapella vocal trio focus on songs collected by three men in the early 20th century — Ralph Vaughan Williams, Percy Grainger, and the lesser-known George Butterworth, who died in the First World War. There are some familiar pieces here, like *Bushes And Briars* and *Lovely On The Water*, but also plenty of delicious rarities, such as the very bizarre *The Ploughboy's Dream* (sung to the tune of *O Little Town Of Bethlehem*), *Ward The Pirate*, and *Riley The Fisherman* where a lovely tune conceals a tragedy as great as Hamlet, but on a far more human scale. With just

three voices they do a lot, listen to the unusual harmonies of *New Garden Fields*, for example, or the way the set of sea shanties builds with its ebbs and flows. The voice is the most primal instrument, of course, but Coope Boyes and Simpson demonstrate its majesty, as well as the depth of emotion and life evident in the songs themselves. The material is never less than superb, and they close with the excellent tale of *Horkstow Grange*, featuring a character who gave his name to one of the classic folk-rock groups, no less than Steeleye Span himself. This trio has done great work before, but the love and care in this is apparent in every note.

— By Chris Nickson

Yael Wand

Antinomy
Independent

Born in Israel and raised in Vancouver, Yael Wand now lives in Northern BC in Barkerville. This is a promising debut release which showcases her sophisticated blend of acoustic singer-songwriter folk with jazzy and Middle Eastern influences. Yael is pretty well traveled and this collection of songs documents her experiences as an adventurer from Jerusalem to the bars of Madrid and beyond. There's songs of love, sleeplessness, uncertainty and joy all well expressed and very well played by her accompanying musicians. Yael has a clear distinctive voice which conveys the emotions of her material with ease — from sensuousness to anxiety, from sorrow to joy. In a world where there is an overwhelming number of singer songwriters it is hard

at times to tell the wheat from the chaff. This is 100% whole wheat and stands up well to repeated listening.

— By Tim Readman

Peggy Seeger

Love Call Me
Home
Appleseed
Recordings

This collection of American traditions (plus two originals) is wonderful. Why? Because of its purely acoustic instrumentation, provided in part by herself and her three children Neill, Kitty, and Calum, and more so, her sweet-as-the-day-she-turned-sixteen voice, which she manages to adapt to the theme of each song. In the a cappella *Bad Bad Girl* she really gets into the character, with a

moaning southern accent. *Careless Love and Loving Hannah* are sung with the whimsy of a young lover. Included in the booklet are a few words about the history or personal connection to each track, a nice touch. A sweet disc of folk music in its most classical form from which folk singers and accompanists can learn some important lessons.

— By Mary Beth Carty

Mark Abis

Changing Inside
Serpentsounds

Unlike Canada and the US, The folk music scene in Britain seems to have abandoned the male singer songwriter. Quick, other than Billy Bragg and Martyn Joseph, name forty.

So it was a treat to listen to Mark Abis, a London based singer-songwriter. It's a fairly standard guitar and harmonica based acoustic folk album. Mark has a lovely voice, accompanies himself

well, and the songs are good, pleasant, and show promise for better things to come. Unfortunately, nice as it is, *Changing Inside* does not signal the rebirth of the British singer songwriter.

— By les siemieniuk

Annabelle Chvostek

Burned My Ass
Massive Quantities of
Good Vibes

This little six song EP is a departure from her jazzy, layered debut *Water*. Here emerges a folkier Annabelle. The CD features just her, simply recorded with no fanfare save her own instrumental, lyrical, and vocal genius. One might easily mistake the opener, strummed on violin, for an American trad. Two songs sung in Slovak (one traditional) feature her brilliant gypsy style guitar playing. And *Food on My Face* is a passionate and hilarious slide guitar reprimand ('Tell me if I got food on my

face!). It's very rare to find an entirely solo (and I mean solo) album that is excellent, and this one most certainly is. I feel drawn to listen to these songs again and again. Do yourself a favor and pick up this uplifting disc at the next Wailin' Jennys or Annabelle show.

— By Mary Beth Carty

Solomon Burke

Make Do With What
You Got
Shout Records

The back bone of the folk and roots business in North America is the singer songwriter. There are a lot of them out there. Sometimes it seems there are too many, and not enough interpreters. Singers who take a good song and fly with it.

That's why it is such a pleasure to listen to Solomon Burke. He doesn't write his material but he certainly owns it. Taking songs by Van Morrison, Hank Williams Jagger and

Richards, he puts the Solomon Burke gospel R and B stamp on all of them, especially a stunning read on Robbie Robertson's *It Makes No Difference*.

This is a wonderful album, but that said, it's not a patch on seeing Solomon live; complete with entourage, throne, and sweaty forehead. That still beats all.

— By les siemieniuk

Daby Toure

Diam
Real Word

Daby Toure's debut recording *Diam* is a striking work that is full of powerful melodies and grooves. It is a stand out recording that should be owned by any fan of good music. The multi-instrumentalist Toure played almost every instrument on the album and recorded a large part of the work at his home studio before bringing the music to producer/keyboardist Cyril Dufay. Toure and Dufay are a per-

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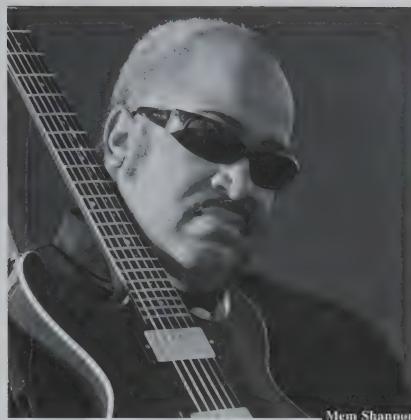
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Mem Shannon

fect partnership; Dufay adds a tasteful electronic element to Toure's round funky bass lines and catchy melodies that perfectly compliment the songs. After moving from Mauritania to France when he was eighteen, Toure immersed himself in Paris' rich music scene taking equal influence from the pop, jazz and world music that he was exposed to there. He uses multi-layered guitar lines, groove heavy bass and a variety of percussion instruments to expose the listener to CD that is light and intricately beautiful but also makes you want to smile, get up and shake your hips.

— Dan Campbell

Mem Shannon

I'm From Phunkville
NorthernBlues Records

This is a massive production finding Shannon at home and in his element – uptown, big-time. With the resurgence of larger-than-life R & B soul men like Solomon Burke, Shannon is cast in the same light. This fifth release combining elements of funk, rock, jazz, gospel, blues and soul is a slick affair with Shannon's vocals its crowning achievement. If he did nothing more than write one song as beautiful as *In A Perfect World* (featuring some stand-out piano by Robert Dabon), he would have accomplished

more than most. The 10-minute *Phunkville* goes one better with a sophisticated arrangement that redefines what funky is – featuring a powerful turn on guitar by Shannon to make Ernie Isley blush. The calypso-flavoured instrumental *The Lights of Caracas (I Didn't Know)* depicts Shannon's jazzier side, featuring more stellar piano from Dabon and more tasteful guitar that begs more. Even Shannon's take on the album's only cover – *Eleanor Rigby* – lends a sorrowful groove to a tired chestnut. This is a potent record and Shannon shines brightly.

— By Eric Thom

Dan Frechette

Lucky Day
Blind Snake Records

This is a very good debut disc from a fresh new voice in Canadian folk music. Dan Frechette. He has it all: he writes, he plays, he sings, all very well. He's "blessed with an enormous talent and a facility for adapting elemental folk forms - bluegrass, Celtic airs, country, ragtime, country blues to his own purpose". That's what his bio says right on his website. And it's right.

Lucky Day showcases Dan's talents very well, but in the end it just sounds like a random collection of good songs. I'm going to wait to

make up my mind until he actually finds the folk form that suits him best and speaks for his soul rather than his talent. *Lucky Day* is a good start on that road.

— By les siemieniuk

Dierdre

One
Six Degrees Records

As a former member of Ekova, a French electronic Goth Cocteau Twins trio, Dierdre, Dierdre Dubois, has branched out on her first solo endeavour with *One*. An interesting mix of electronica, entrancing voice and distinctive instrumentation: where ancient meets modern and west meets east to create a satisfying listen.

— By Philip Harries

Laura Cortese

Hush
JAR Productions

This is bloody brilliant. Laura blends Scottish fiddle roots with more contemporary music influences to great effect. She's assembled a great team of musicians to accompany her and their playing is fresh and energetically youthful throughout. The thing that really gets hold of me about this CD though is Laura's singing. Her voice is warm, passionate, rich and fruity. Her reading of *The Green Wedding*, that opens the album, grabs you immediately with its wit and charm. Full marks to all concerned. This is going to be staying in my CD player for a bit.

— By Tim Readman

Tolan McNeil

There Will Always Be
a Salesman
Red Cat

When a producer turns to put his own music to tape strange things begin to happen. All the wacky thoughts he is holding back from the art of others are manifested in his own masterpiece. Witness the work of David

Hidalgo, Brian Eno, Mitchell Froom.

Tolan McNeil has been the guitar guy or producer for such Canadian westcoasters as Carolyn Mark, The Buttless Chaps and others. Always a fine player and knob twiddler, McNeil is a just a bundle of eclectic musical energy. The man has influences be they of oral or aural substance. The subtlety of his demeanour in person belies the frenetic volley of music that must be bouncing through his head when he puts his talent to work in composition. Sixties French pop, avant-garde jazz, down home picking, concrete poetry, tales that would be tall if they could stand upright, fine wine and cheap whiskey (or vice versa) have all stewed to become the latest solo effort from a remarkable collaborator. And none of it out of place.

— By Chris Martin

Tara Angell

Down and Out: The Come Down EP
Rykodisc

Like a walk down a wet and lonely alleyway, *Down and Out: The Come Down EP* is a slow, dark discovery into Tara Angell. Her voice, deep and enticing, holds your hand through six skillfully arranged songs. The EP showcases a promising new voice from an artist on

the rise.
— By Philip Harries

Iron & Wine
Woman King
SubPop Records

Sam Beam's Iron & Wine is something of a one man band: writing the songs and multi-tracking vocals and instrumentals, though on this release he has some help from Sarah Beam, Jim Becker, Brian Deck and EJ Holowicki. *Woman King* is a sparse six-track release, making it almost an EP by today's jam-packed CD standards. There's a relaxed, take-your-time feel to the songs, though. Mellow is the key word. There's echoes of everything from America to Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young in the breathy airiness of the production. *Gray Stables*, especially, has a nice atmospheric shimmer to it. The final track gets a little more raucous, bordering on folk-rock, where he cuts loose with: "We were born to fuck each other one way or another..." in *Evening On The Ground (Lilith's Song)*. Some reliable craftsmanship here, though.

— By Barry Hammond



Dan Frechette

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Joel Rafael Band

Woodyboyne

Applesseed

Recent years have seen a steady flow of albums of Woody Guthrie songs and other tributes. One of the best of these was the Joel Rafael Band's *Woodeye*, which came out on Jackson Browne's Inside label. *Woodyboyne*, the sequel, is even better. Besides one Rafael original, the powerful Guthrie-type *Sierra*

Blanca Massacre, Rafael also provided the music for four sets of Guthrie lyrics. The arrangement on *Rangers Command* gives the song a fresh new sound. The only very well-known song is *This Train is Bound For Glory*. Usually, big name guests serve mostly to sell a CD but in this case the number and quality of guests (Arlo Guthrie, Jackson Browne, Jimmy LaFave, Jennifer Warnes, Van Dyke Parks, The Burns Sisters) actually help make this album a winner.

— By Paul-Émile Comeau

Marcia Ball

Live, Down the Road

Alligator

If you are having a house party on a Saturday night with all your crazy friends you should have this disc in the music player on your computer scattered amongst all your other faves. Every once in a while when the chat in the kitchen gets too deep and meaningful Marcia and the band will roll in kick you in the ass and remind you that IT'S A PARTY, GOOF! Killer band of heavyweights too.

— By Chris Martin

Rosheen

Musique Celtique

Compass Records

C'est Bon! Rosheen is a seven-piece Celtic/Irish dance band hailing from Quebec. Their debut album, *Musique Celtique* has tight instrumentation, a wonderful



Rosheen

flow from beginning to end and a first-rate mix of traditional and original songs and instrumentals in both English and French. The strong musicianship and delightful song selection is augmented by Lynn Vallières' crisp and alluring vocals that will have you raising your glass of Fin Du Monde and dancing an Irish Jig.

— By Philip Harries

Julie Lee

Stillhouse Road
Compadre

I'm too lazy to look it up but someone out there do the research. How often is it that an album of country/bluegrass music comes out of Nashville with the entire roster of songs written by the performer? Add to that the notion that the songs are well worth the listen, and I am only guessing but, I bet you'd be hard pressed to find many.

Julie Lee can enlist the likes of Vince Gill, Rob Ickes, Alison Krauss, Colin Linden, Tammy Rodgers and more A-list players not because it is Nashville and every gun is for hire but because she is an equal if not better songwriter and she has their respect. This is traditionally styled music as fresh as cornbread made from scratch. I know — sounds cheesy — buy the disc and you'll get the reference.

— By Chris Martin

Clumsy Lovers

Smart Kid
Netwerk

Take a dollop of Celtic, a dollop of bluegrass, and a dollop of alt.country, and mix with a massive amount of talent and imagination and you have *Smart Kid*. This is the Vancouver based Clumsy Lover's seventh release and the first on the savvy and tasteful Netwerk Records. It's fantastic and surely the best of the lot. And isn't that the way it's supposed to be in a career?

From the opening story of *Bobby Banjo* to the closing notes and clever word play of the long and melancholy *Not Long For This World*, The band does not set a foot or note wrong. *Smart Kid* is long for this musical world.

— By les siemieniuk

Plywood 3/4

Beauté Mécanique
Migratoire

If Tom Waits joined forces with the Great Uncles of the Revolution and moved to Québec, they would sound a bit like Plywood 3/4, a wild creative group of seven Montréalais. *Beauté Mécanique* is progressive-folk. The group is comprised by talented accordion player Priscilla Gendron, songwriter/guitarist

Éric Villeneuve, two trombonists, a variable rhythm section, and Erick Jerry, fabricator of unknown instruments. *Beauté Mécanique* deals with love and schizophrenia, more specifically the story of a man who is disillusioned with married life and tries to create a lover for himself in his workshop.

Beauté Mécanique is the answer to a question that has plagued the decade: 'What is he building in there?' Ah-ha, finally — it was a lover! Mixed with klezmer, blues, and country, but the overriding sound is always weird and carnivalesque, à la *Frank's Wild Years*. At times minimalist (just piano and voice, or banjo and accordion), at times primordially screaming, at times *Black Cat White Cat* soundtrack-esque, there is never a dull moment. Frank Zappa and Captain Beefheart would be jealous. Likewise, Zubot and Dawson and most of Eastern Europe.

— By Mary Beth Carty

Black 47

Elvis Murphy's Green
Suede Shoes
Gadfly

This New York-based Irish band has been partaking in rabble-rousing for the benefit of the working class for the past 15 years. The group's latest release is a companion piece to *Green*

Suede Shoes, the recently published memoir by Larry Kirwan, the group's singer and songwriter. The album, which includes six new tracks, two new recordings of songs from deleted albums, and four more songs drawn from side projects, is unlikely to propel the group beyond the cult status it has already achieved but it's nonetheless a strong album.

Kirwan's singing style may too idiosyncratic to ever give the group mass appeal but the passion and the social insight remain very much in evidence.

— By Paul-Émile Comeau

Charanga Cakewalk

Loteria de la Cumbia
Lounge
Triloka/Artemis

The nombre de pluma of Austin multi-instrumentalist Michael Ramos (keyboard and accordion for John Mellencamp, Patty Griffin and the Bodeans), Charanga Cakewalk is a studio project that evokes three of my guiltiest pleasures — lotteries, lounges, and especially cumbia. Cumbia, the lazy, loping rhythm of Colombia alive at the centre of this recording, has none of the richness or complexity of other Latin rhythms. However, it gets Juan Valdez and burro home from the coffee fields with a spring in his step and that's good enough for me. *Loteria* is a playful musical romp, utterly Catholic in its source material and instrumentation (is that actually a vocoder in track 5?) and unrepentantly so, especially when Ramos is in his most Esquivel-esque of moods. Muy bueno.

— By Gallagher Parkinson

Recordings

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PENGUIN
Books
Summer
2005

Les Gitans de Sarajevo

En Voyage
Independent

There are few CDs that I can honestly say improved my quality of life. This is one of them. My physical health is now top shape, due to the mad dancing that ensues when it's in my player. And I have become more popular ("Hey can you come over and bring that gypsy CD of yours?").

However, my mental well-being is at stake – I am beginning to identify as a gypsy. Juno nominated Montreal group Les Gitans de Sarajevo is comprised of seven musicians from different regions of the former Yugoslavia (all hail Quebec's lax immigration policy!). With 11 traditional and three original

songs ranging from achingly melancholic to exotically furious, the yearning melodies are permeated by Heps and Opas, and lie-dee-die mouth music that will have you singing along. The singer-accordionist Boris Batula has an exotic Mediterranean voice that could only have been developed in the midst of the Balkans, and all members play with a skill that belies years of practice.

File next to Emir Kusturica soundtracks. The one thing that bothers me about this CD is that sounds a bit like a digital studio album, if you listen very carefully. I would prefer to think it was recorded in a field filled with wild dancing gypsies. Not a big deal, however, because as I said at the beginning, I can't understand how I managed to cope before I discovered Les Gitans de Sarajevo. How did I host parties? How did I survive? My only advice is, if you buy this disc, get an anti-skip CD player, because unearthly mayhem

will ensue. Oh yes.

– By Mary Beth Carty

DobaCaracol

Soley
Disques Indica

Quebec's DobaCaracol is the musical child of best-friends and soulmates Carole and Doriane. With water-like voices and multi-percussive talents, these two young women have created one of Canada's few world-pop acts, comparable to Rusted Root. Doba Caracol have a live show like no other - we never know what percussive instrument they will pick up next, and they dance while playing. The Ivory Coast drummer, Momo, is a very important band member - he sings some Senoufo, and adds credibility to the world aspect of this group. With the groovy organ sounds of Martin Lizotte and the variable rhythm of every song, Doba Caracol is capable of transporting us to the dance floor. My only complaints

are the over-positive 'freedom' lyrics and occasional voice over-dubs.

Recommended for those who, deep down, have a little dred-lock in their heart.

– By Mary Beth Carty

Chris Cotton

I Watched The Devil Die
Yellow Dog Records

Chris Cotton may well be the future of the blues, melding new school with old and turning in a 12-song classic that updates pre-War Piedmont blues with a passion. Cotton injects excitement into chestnuts like Willa McTell's loping *Dying Crapshooter's Blues*, Mississippi John Hurt's breathtaking *Louis Collins* and a version of Skip James' *I'm So Glad* that inspires as it thrills. Current compositions blend seamlessly with the past as evidenced by strong originals like his coolly calculated *Come On* and the beguiling title track. The result of a two-day jam ses-

sion with Memphis and Clarksdale natives (including Big Jack Johnson on guitar and Adam Woodard on piano), *Devil* is ripe with spontaneous, yet studied, sounds that stick to your bones and won't let go: like Cotton's own *Black Night*, which features Big Jack on salacious slide and the spry Woodward on piano. The Devil may have died but he surely died happy.

– By Eric Thom

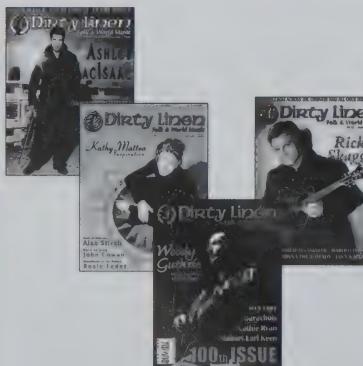
Ridley Bent

Blam
MapleMusic Recordings

Ridley Bent's first release *Blam* is a unique and interesting assemblage of stories with lots of promise. Bent is bending the boundaries of rap music, by adding a variety of themes, musical arrangements and instrumentation from the likes of country, folk and heavy metal. For the most part, the songs are catchy with interesting lyrical twists, but

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Anne Lister

Blam's strength lies in Bent's ability to rhyme a simple story.

— By Philip Harries

Marce Lacouture

La Joie Cadienne
Cut Up Records

Helen Boudreux

Chanson d'Avant Les Bals
Boudreux Records

Marco Lacouture is known for several things, including a partnership with Butch Hancock back in the 80s, but she isn't known for being a prolific recording artist. She currently performs with two groups but *La Joie Cadienne* is a solo project that features an all-star Cajun cast including guitarist Sonny Landreth, as well as members of Beausoleil, Balfa Toujours, and others. *La Joie Cadienne* features mostly old French songs from the pre-Cajun repertoire, some of which she learned directly from Lula Landry and Inez Catalonia, two repositories of Cajun folklore. The singer also wrote a few of the songs, including the title song and her own tributes to *Inez* and *Lula*. Lacouture has a beautiful voice and it'll be interesting to hear her with her two bands, namely Réveil and the Nouveau String Band, when those

groups eventually record. Helen Boudreux is mostly well-known in Louisiana as a singer of country-inflected Cajun songs. With Chansons d'Avant Les Bals she offers 23 a cappella songs that go back as far as the French Middle Ages and the Renaissance. These are songs that aren't usually sung by Cajun artists but folklorists have been recording this oral tradition since John and Alan Lomax delved into the repertoire in the 1930s. Unlike *La Joie Cadienne*, which was ably produced by Sonny Landreth, Boudreux's album is a bare bones production but it's certainly adequate for the type of project that it is. Fans of Cajun music who wish to delve deeper into the French roots of the music could find these two albums of special interest. — By Paul-Émile Comeau

Captain Tractor

North of the Yellowhead
Sixshooter Records

Somewhere on the road from folk to mainstream; in between the Pogues' whiskey and weed fuelled poetry and Great Big Sea's watery folk-pop; lies the burnt out hulk of many a

'party band'. You know the kind. They are a bunch of blokes that celebrate drinking, partying and being in a band in a frenetic student pleasing beer soaked frenzy. They are clumsy, artless, swear a bit and have left their sense of deftness and tact at the door. If you are fan of that kind of thing then this will bring back many happily blurred memories.

— By Tim Readman

Anne Lister

Waiting for the Hero
Hearthfire

Musicians on this album include Steafan Hannigan, Mike O'Connor, and Matt Crum. There's some excellent playing but I didn't warm to Anne's vocals much at all. Her tonality is a bit edgy and her delivery of the lyrics is awkward and unconvincing. The melodies are repetitive and unsurprising.

In different hands some of these songs would be worth a listen. A worthy effort for friends, fans and family but not much here for anyone else.

— By Tim Readman

Debashish Bhattacharya

Calcutta Slide Guitar
World Music Network

Bhattacharya picked up his first guitar at age three, and 39 years later he is a master (Pandit) musician, playing Indian roots music on various unique slide guitars. Over a bubbling percussive pulse from tabla and tambura, his lyrical atmospheric passages segue to rollicking raga on the six tracks, each extended pieces wherein he takes the time to invoke his rich and evocative aural tapestries. If *Prema Chakor* is gorgeous, *Nata Raaj* is a tour de force, and by the time you get to *Usha*, you are totally drawn in by this fresh new take on a venerable tradition. From wistful to wanton, DB weaves a range of feelings

with the expertise of an old master. This is a magnificent album from a rising star of the roots scene.

— By David Ingram

Felix Baloy

Un Poquito de Fé
Tumi

New albums of Cuban music may not appear with the same frequency as they did eight years ago in the wake of the *Buena Vista Social Club* phenomenon, but on the evidence of *Un Poquito de Fé* quantity is being replaced by quality. Havana-based singer Félix Valoy, is an artist in the mould of Beny Moré, the great band leader of the mid-20th century, and has a superb command of vintage-flavoured Cuban son and its close relatives. However, the overall feel on his debut solo release is more akin to the Afro-Cuban All Stars, for whom Valoy sang lead for several years. The 12 tracks combine tight arrangements with descarga-style jams, and feature more than 30 musicians in all.

Un Poquito de Fé's sound is dominated by Valoy's rich and supple voice, a five-piece all-trumpet brass section (sometimes slightly out of tune), a wealth of percussion, and Julio Antonio Montono's piano - played mostly as a rhythm instrument. The only boleros *Y No*

Espero Mas and *Ten un Poquito de Fé* aren't lush and sappy, and the rest of the songs swing like a Havana bike-rickshaw before a hurricane. With more than an hour's dance music this is a great Cuban-party album for summer.

— By Tony Montague

Jane Sapp

Movin' On
Pyramid Records

Gospel music lives! Produced by Ken Whiteley, this joyous collection of originals and traditio-nals, solo and with choir, is one to be admired. Jane Sapp's instrument-of-a-voice is capable of many volumes and timbres, and her phrasing and ornamentation is lovely. She has just enough imperfections in her voice to elongate her from any comparison with those annoying ornament-obsessed American Idol competitors. Her piano playing reveals a true understanding and love of the instrument. Spunky backup choirs, and other minimal instrumentation (organ, stand-up bass, bongos) make this a classy disc from a woman who knows gospel.

— By Mary Beth Carty



Felix Baloy



Sandy Denny

A Boxful of Treasures

Fledgling

Reviewed by Tom Coxworth

It is difficult for me to believe that Sandy Denny is gone for almost thirty years. It should be stated that her voice was like no other, as distinctive as Janis Joplin, Robert Plant or Billie Holiday. Those who point to her as an influence are many not least being June Tabor, Mary Black, and Niamh Parsons. This alone should justify the addition of this five disc set to even the completist of the Sandy (or Fairport Convention) musical legacy.

A Boxful of Treasures is a most perfect introduction to her career from early demo's to her very last studio track. While the music remains as

the testament, it is the story that is woven within the fifty-five page essay that sets the scene for each track. Sandy had the voice of an angel but suffered from low self-esteem and insecurities leading to a chaotic and eventually out of control life. Her story is treated with great love and respect as it details, in interview excerpts, and comments from many of her peers, including Richard Thompson, Dave Swarbrick, Dick Gaughan, and Ian Matthews.

This is indeed a labour of love as each selection demonstrates her uncanny way of addressing a lyric or as an artist ready to explore a variety of styles from 'American folk' or Cohen or Mitchell, (*Bird on a Wire, Now and Then*) to psychedelic versions of

English traditional songs (*A Sailor's Life*), and jazz standards like (*Old Fashion Waltz*). It's all here – the career highlights and favourites.

For me, as for many Sandy fans, it is the rare demo's and live performances that hold it all together. A *Boxful of Treasures* takes it from an early version of *Fotheringay*, both included in the collection. Other highlights include *She Moves Through the Fair* with Dave Swarbrick, *Ecoute Ecoute* (a French version of *Listen Listen*), and a stunning live rendition of *John the Gun*.

There is also a unevenness to some of the performances and this is explained in the essay as it documents the chronology of each recording and what was happening in her life. In short, when she was happy the music was all that everyone remembers. But even these tracks are there to move the real story of her life. For even when the potential was not realized there would be no other who would compete to present a better version.

It has been said that Sandy had never received the acclaim that she so justly deserves but this box set is a testament to her music. There's the shame that her career was unfulfilled but *A Boxful of Treasures* gets it right and possibly a new generation will discover the voice and songs of Sandy Denny.

Waterson:Carthy

The Definitive Collection
Highpoint Recordings

A compilation of standout tracks from *Blue Murder*, *Waterson:Carthy*, *Broken Ground*, *Common Tongue*, *A Dark Light*, and *Fishes and Fine Yellow Sand*. Every one is a gem. *Captain Kidd* showcases Eliza's stunning ability. *Ma and Pa* do pretty well too! The only reason not to buy this is if you have all the CDs it is drawn from already!

– By Tim Readman

Oysterband

Before The Flood
Running Man Records

*

Sixteen tracks selected from the four albums of Oysterband's prehistoric, never before available on CD. Unless you are a collector or a completist there's little of interest here. Most of it is better left to memory.

Instead pick up a copy of *The Big Session*, reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

– By Tim Readman

Oysterband

Twenty Golden Tie-Slackers
Plus
Running Man Records

**

Early Oysterband recording of English traditional instrumentals with bass, electric guitar, sax and the other ingredients that gave them their distinctive sound. Fans will revel in nostalgia. It seemed a bit past its sell by date to me.

– By Tim Readman

Various

Back Roads to Cold Mountain
Smithsonian Folkways

****1/2

After the success of *Cold Mountain* and its soundtrack John Cohen was recruited to produce a separate compilation of actual source music. The 27 tracks feature Old Baptist lined-out singing, sacred harp music, Africanbanjo, Scots-Irish fiddle traditions, and story ballads sung unaccompanied, many recorded decades ago by Cohen himself. The 36-page booklet makes it well-nigh indispensable.

– By Paul-Emile Comeau

Si, Soy Llanero Joropo

Music from the Orinoco Plains of Columbia
Smithsonian Folkways

The music of the llanero (or plains) is often used interchangeably with joropo, a very extroverted form of music whose themes often reflect the cattleherding lifestyle. Joropo music is very demanding technically and this group features passionate singers and virtuosos on such instruments as harpand banda (a four-stringed, pear-shaped guitar). Recommended.

– Paul-Emile Comeau

Vento De Agua

Materia Prima
Smithsonian Folkways

***1/2

At the core of Afro-Puerto Rican music lies bomba and plena, sometimes known as bombiplena. The

group known as Venta de Agua (A wind of water) has an unplugged version which is the percussive version of the full group. In other words, *Materia Prima* features the raw, albeit experimental, sounds of modern Puerto Rican music stripped down to their most basic rhythms.

– By Paul-Émile Comeau

Last Night's Fun

Chris Sherburn &
Denny Bartley
Rabbie Rouser

This 1995 album is well worth revisiting. Bartley has an urgent vocal style, aided by Kate Rusby on two of the songs. Sherburn's subtle and masterful concertina is utterly charming on the tunes, which dominate the disc, with Bartley's deft guitar adding just the right touches to underscore the melodies. There's lots of Irish music in Last Night's Fun, and they do the tradition proud.

– By David Ingram

Various Artists

The Rough Guide to Bottleneck Blues – (World Music Network)

The idea of sliding a metal bar or a bottleneck over the frets of a stringed instrument may go back hundreds of years, but the twanging sound it produces has come to be associated chiefly with the Delta blues. The excellent *Rough Guide to Bottleneck Blues* features a selection of archival and present-day recordings from some of the master sliders.

The roll-call here on the compilation is impressive. The old-time blues is represented by the likes of Fred McDowell, Furry Lewis, Blind Willie Johnson, Son House, Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, Bukka White, and Charley Patton. And there are some great recordings of lesser-known musicians; Allen Shaw's *Moanin' the*

Blues and Willie Harris' *Never Drive a Stranger from your Door* are deep-and-lonesome classics, and Kokomo Arnold's superb recording from the early '30s of *The Twelves (Dirty Dozens)* is a propulsive and raunchy precursor of rock and roll.

The contemporary scene fares a tad less well. There's nothing from Kelly Joe Phelps, to name but one notable absence, and while English guitarist Martin Simpson performs a brilliantly yearning *I Can't Keep from Crying Sometimes*, I could do without the occasional addition of organ and back-up female vocals. The late John Fahey's strangely-titled *Dance of the Inhabitants of the Palace of King Philip XIV of Spain* suggests Mississippi sharecroppers rather than Madrid courtiers with its big-twang sound. But overall this 22-track album provides a great intro to one of the most vibrant guitar traditions.

– By Tony Montague

Luiz Bonfa

Solo in Rio 1959
Smithsonian Folkways

This is the type of music that's easy to shrug off after a cursory listen but such a dismissal would be unfair. When pioneer producer Emory Cook recorded seventeen tracks in 1959 for his Cook label, Bonfa proved himself to be in peak form. To those seventeen tracks another fourteen from the same session have been added. The man's music is very soft on the ears but at its heart the music is suffused with a deep, intimate musicality. Bonfa's ability to improvise so fluidly, mostly on his own compositions, made him an innovator. His cool, nylon-string guitar sound, to which he sometimes added breathy, languid vocals, had a timeless, luminous quality to it. Besides being a performer whose recording career started with 78s and ended

with CDs, Luiz Bonfa's music served as a precursor to bossa nova. Solo in Rio 1959 is a rare gem waiting to be rediscovered and booklet annotation is exemplary. – By Paul-Émile Comeau

Various

Africa Remix
Milan
*****1/2

Just the word 'remix' is enough to send lovers of roots music running for the exits, but this compilation of contemporary African music contains only one electronic reworking. The other 15 tracks comprise a cross-section of styles and approaches from all over the continent, from established artists (Thomas Mapfumo, Oumou Sangare, Youssou N'Dour) to undiscovered gems and the next wave (Kenyan rappers Juliani et al.). Sunny Nigerian guitar stylings, grinding Afro-funk and soulful, exotic pop are all represented, as well as a few surprises, like Mariem Hassan & Leyoad's elemental Wajadu, a desert blues that sounds as old as time. A refreshing trip to the well, and bound to introduce you to something new.

– By Scott Lingley

Various

A Love Song For
Bobby Long
Hyena Records

Regardless of how this movie does, this is one eclectic and collectable musical compilation. From Los Lobos to Come's Thalia Zedek, Lightnin' Hopkins to Nada Surf's alt rock this is one wild mix. Relative newcomers like Theresa Andersson (with dobro and guitar work by Sonny Landreth) and Shudder To Think's Nathan Larson, New Orleans' Grayson Capps also contributes two songs (as well as working with Andersson's on hers). This invigorating line-up is

not without penalty, however, as there are two tracks by John Travolta to be endured – thankfully they add up to just under two minutes, tops. Plenty of opportunity for Big Bill Morganfield or Magic Slim & The Teardrops to cleanse the palette with some quality blues. This soundtrack should pull the movie along nicely.

– By Eric Thom

Various

A Tribute to Amalia Rodrigues
World Connection
***1/2

This features some of the young women tipped to be the next great fadista, as well as some contemporaries of Amalia's. But while all of the songs were written by her, not all of them are done in the fado style. There is flamenco here, and salsa, and the orchestra Negros De Luz, whose string version of *Olha a Ribeirinha* samples the lady herself. Fascinating.

– By Shawna Biamonte

Various

Various Civilisations of Southern Africa
Arc Music
**

This features some of the oldest tribes of southern Africa, including the San (Bushmen), Zulu, and Xhosa. The languages and traditions

of these people is in danger of dying out, so ARC music has compiled a collection of ritual songs, chants, and prayers of the region. While pleasant to listen to, I wouldn't say this is essential listening. For aspiring ethnomusicologists and die-hard African music fans only.

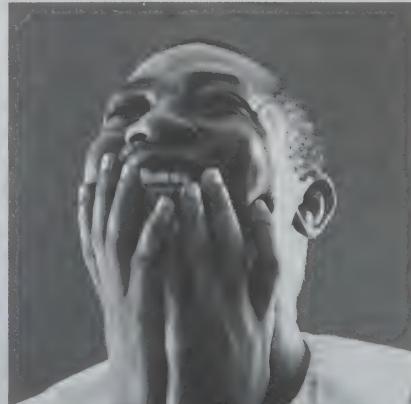
– By Shawna Biamonte

Various

A Tribute to Billy Joe Shaver
– Live
Compadre

More and more these days artists are becoming recognizable by one name. Few deserve the accolade. This compilation disc gives tribute through music by, and inspired by, one of the best songwriters America has ever offered. Personal anecdotes of praise and friendship from some of the genre's most regarded performers add a wonderful intimacy to a disc already strong for its material and warm live feel. Perhaps not as famous as Waylon, Willie or Merle but a hero nonetheless to those who know him simply as Shaver.

– By Chris Martin



Youssou N'Dour: Africa Remix

Recordings



Joni Mitchell

Painting with
Words and Music
Eagle Eye Media

After reviewing Joni's excellent greatest hits compilation for the last edition of this publication I was looking forward to watching this DVD. It didn't take long for disappointment to set in. The intro features a mawkishly 'sincere' introduction by producer John Brunton loaded with hyperbole and trite plaudits. Then we see Joni painting and suddenly 'remembering' she is supposed to be performing. She dashes through the building and arrives on stage to a rapturous reception. How contrived is that? She plays a few songs on her own before she is joined by her band of guitar, bass, drums and trumpet.

None of the versions of the material really impress even though some of her best songs are here – *Big Yellow Taxi*, *Crazy Cries of Love*, *Hejira* and *Woodstock* to name a few. The whole production suffers from a cloying cosiness which made me want to watch The Sex Pistols' *Filth and Fury* just to prove I'm still alive. Joni designed the set for the gig and it's all comfortably off-yuppie-looking couples sitting on comfortable sofas and

cushions comfortably enjoying being in the presence of a comfortable Legend. At one point Ms. Mitchell treats us to a bit of story telling. She's not very convincing as a raconteur that's for sure. Graham Nash shows up to present her with her Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame award and she pretends convincingly to be surprised. It's all too safe, too middle aged and too middle class for me. I prefer to remember her in my own way rather than being irritated by pap like this.

– By Tim Readman

Various

Festival In The Desert
World Village

Timbuktu has long been considered a virtual emblem of remoteness, but 60 kilometres further into the southern Sahara desert is Essakane, the parched and desolate setting of this celebration of contemporary Tuareg music. The sun beams down remorselessly, and has doubtlessly influenced the visual tone for the eerie, over-exposed, contrasty style, paced as kinetically as the whole adventure must have been. The film version of the 2003 *Festival In The Desert* is a riveting document, presenting some excellent musicians onstage and also, through some telling interviews, provides a bit of a window into Tamashek culture. Long

considered Berbers, or barbarians, then sub-grouped into Tuareg, also a pejorative term, the Tamashek have prevailed despite their harsh environment and their long term troubles with the Malian government in Bamako.

Whereas the previously released CD contained 20 tracks, the hour-long film features only ten of the performances, but the choices have been excellent. Rising stars of the Tamashek music scene Ensemble Tariit sing a great song, and recent revelations Tinariwen are also a gritty marvel. French group Lo'Jo, who had a hand in the staging of the event, also perform a musical gem with rich harmonies and a violin player who echoes the short, plaintive bursts of desert flute. A pair of Mali's biggest names, Oumou Sangare and Ali Farka Toure are each in top form, and England's Robert Plant does an intriguing medley of blues songs, with Justin Adams led accompaniment very much in sympathy with the insistent rhythms and tricky patterns of their desert hosts. Django also appears playing with Lo'Jo, and Diné group Blackfire, from the Navajo Nation, add some tough guitar rock from their repertoire of politically engaged songs.

The best of the performances, staged in the evenings under colourful lights, are



Ali Farka Toure: Festival in the Desert

mesmerizing, and the balance of director Lionel Brouet's document of the event, surveying the glaringly lit desert scene and listening to the tales and observations of the participants, extremely illuminating. One of the more engaging concert films since Woodstock and The Last Waltz, this one is a fascinating watch, and if your DVD player is routed through the stereo speakers, a great listen to boot.

– By David Ingram

Shawn Colvin

Polaroids: A Video Collection
Columbia Records

The music videos, which make up the first 10 items on this collection, demonstrate the modern video director and record producer's passion for trying to take a singer/guitar player/songwriter and tweeze, tease and tie-dye them mercilessly into whatever happens to be the fashion of the week. Colvin's hair changes in length from dark and short (with a stylish hat) to longish and back-combed and striped, to blonde, to auburn



Joni Mitchell

terviews, one with Chris Douridas and one with Jody Denberg. You can also listen to Colvin's commentaries on the tracks. This collection will please her fans and convert new ones.

— By Barry Hammond

Old 97's

Live DVD
New West Records

Like their music, the Old 97's debut DVD for is a lean, mean, stripped-down, but clean and tight affair. The band has been called Americana, Alt-Country, Texas Shuffle, but it's closer to just plain Rock & Roll and Pop: better than average melodies, hooks, and lyrics delivered in a high-energy fashion by a standard rock quartet of two guitars, bass and drums by men who seem comfortable in their skins. The photography is as bright, crisp, and clear as the band's colorful shirts and T-shirts and the neon sign behind them on the Troubadour's stage in Hollywood, where the concert is filmed. Somewhat surprisingly, the band is closer in appearance to a clean-cut New Wave band than grungy rockers. There might be madness in the music when front-man and lyricist Rhett Miller gets into it, his sweat and spit flying as he shakes his head, his intense dark eyes staring out from behind drenched hair, but it's inspired madness, the out-there of a determined athlete

or artist, rather than the ad-dled, drugged-out madness of some self-indulgent rock wreck. Since their discs are short on identified band photos, it was interesting to see what the fabled lyricist actually looked like: a lanky, long-haired, soft-spoken, in-shape guy, with a mole on his chin, who appears to wear reading glasses off-stage. Equally interesting to see exquisitely-toned guitarist Ken Bethea's lead parts, which are more structured, multi-finger slides between chord positions and hammer-on/pull-offs of same, rather than the single-note spew-guitar flurries of rock guitar Gods. Murry Hammond, looking like Stephen King's younger brother, with his good-natured finger-plucked bass and solid backing and alternate lead vocals and Philip Peeples' bouncy drumming contribute to a band that looks more like Blondie in their prime, than the beer-gutted Texas bar band you might expect.

The DVD is more about simplicity, letting you see who they are and how they do it, than anything fancy and arty but, like the music, such simplicity manages to house a fair amount of variety. All those weird word connections between the lines, like: "The walls are closing in/looks like it's closing time again," "He's got the goods/but he's not good for his word," and all the interlocking car/battle

imagery in *Won't Be Home* really stand out live.

They cover a fair range off all albums. There's a few favorites missing, like *Great Barrier Reef*, *W-I-F-E*, and *The Other Shoe*, but Oppenheimer is on the documentary soundtrack and they do *King Of All Of The World*, *Rollerskate Skinny*, *Lonely Holiday*, *Jagged*, *Valentine*, *Doreen*, *Big Brown Eyes* and *Time Bomb* as well as the best songs off the last album, *Drag It Up*. The lesser tracks are all at least interesting and there's 20 tracks in all. Without the overdubbing and with only two voices live, the vocals are a little rougher than the albums but what they lack in perfect pitch they make up for in immediacy. Particularly nice is Miller's sweet backing of Hammond on an acoustic *Valentine*. Good value.

— By Barry Hammond

Tiller's Folly

A Fine Kettle of Fish
Independent

Tiller's Folly has been kicking around for a number of years — since the big Canadian Celtic music scare of the late nineties. This recording, their fifth, of a concert at the Gulf of Georgia Cannery in Steveston BC, is a fine "best of" record for those that don't know the band.

Bruce Coughlan is the frontman and songwriter in the band. He belts out his

British Columbia historical songs with a voice sometimes reminiscent of Andy M. Stewart — a good thing — and is more than ably backed by the amazing fiddle and mandolin of Nolan Murray, Laurence Knight on bass, and Eric Red on guitars. They've also included a fairly standard DVD package of the concert plus some extras, but I had much more fun just listening to the CD, *A Fine Kettle of Fish* indeed.

— By les siemieniuk

Willie Nelson &

Friends

Outlaws & Angels
Eagle Eye Media

It's not surprising that Willie Nelson, whose own work pioneered the blending of country, jazz, Hispanic, black music and rock and roll should be at the center of this mega-show, which contains all those elements. In 2002 a star-studded cast of friends came together for the Stars & Guitars concert in Nashville, in 2003, on his 70th birthday another lineup converged for Live & Kickin' in New York. Now, for the third consecutive year, the action moves to Los Angeles for this all-star love-fest, *Outlaws & Angels*. The angels are Rickie Lee Jones, Carole King, Shelby Lynne, Lucinda Williams, and Lee Ann Womack. The outlaws are Bob Dylan, Keith Richards, Merle Haggard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Los Lonely Boys, Toby Keith, Toots Hibbert, Al Green, Ben Harper, The Holmes Brothers, Joe Walsh, and Kid Rock.

It's tough to completely love these kind of schmooze-fests, which always have that self-congratulatory show-biz aura of The Rat Pack at their incestuous worst. On the other hand, with a solidly professional backing band with the likes of Jimmy Rip and Nils Lofgren on guitars, backed by ace session drummer Jim Keltner, it's also pretty hard not to have some great musical moments. The peaks of the show are the duet of Willie and Bob Dylan on *You Win Again*, *Rainin' In My Heart* with Al Green, Willie trading licks with Ben Harper on *Midnight Rider*, reggae star Toots Hibbert, Rickie Lee Jones, and Keith Richards alternating solos with Merle Haggard. Joe Walsh contributes a hot slide solo. The NASCAR idiot-rock star, Kid Rock, seems a bit out of place jumping around on a frail-looking Jerry Lee Lewis's piano, as tough-guy-actor host, James Caan, keeps the stars on the move (probably because the middle-aged Los Angeles beautiful-people audience have brief attention spans). If you're into star-spotting, you can catch glimpses of actress Kelly Lynch and director Rob Reiner in the audience. Willie's voice may be getting a little shaky but he can still play his battered old acoustic guitar with grace, skill and intense, expressive feeling, putting many a younger player to shame. If you're a Willie Nelson, or rock and roll fan, you could do worse than to own this concert. Extras include backstage rehearsal footage.

— By Barry Hammond

75
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DUDS



Tiller's Folly

Female Rambling Sailor

Traditional
Arranged by
Ian Robb

D A D A

Come all you maids both near and far and.
list - en to my di - tte - y. 'Twas near Graves - end there.
lived a maid she was both ne - at and pr - et - ty.
Her true love he was pres - sed a - way and drow - ned.
in some fore - ign - sea. Which caused this fair maid for to
say I'll be a ram - b - ling sai - l - or.

6 F#m A Bm D D A

12 D A F#m A Bm

18 D A F#m

24 Bm D D A F#m

30 A F#m A Bm

With jacket blue and trousers white, just like a
sailor neat and tight,

The sea it was the heart's delight of the female
rambling sailor;

From stem to stern she freely goes, she braves all
dangers fears no foes,

But soon you shall hear of the overthrow of the
female rambling sailor.

*Though never did her courage fail, 'twas
stormy seas and wintry gale

*O'er this fair maiden did prevail, this female
rambling sailor.

From stem to stern she freely went, where oft
times she'd been many;

Her hand did slip and down she fell; she calmly
bade this world farewell.

When her lily-white breast in sight it came it ap-
peared to be a female's frame;

Rebecca Young it was the name of the female
rambling sailor;

May the willows wave all round her grave, and
round the laurels planted;

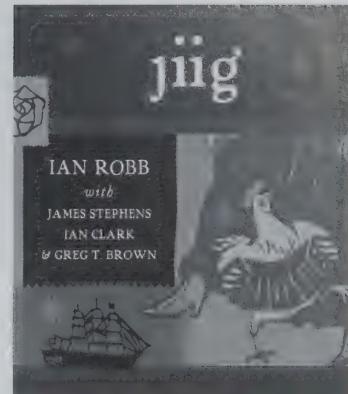
May the roses sweet grow at the feet of the one
who was undaunted.

So come all you maids both near and far and lis-
ten to my story;

Her body is anchored in the ground let's hope
her soul's in glory..

On the river Thames she's known real well; no
sailor there could her excel;

One tear let fall as a last farewell to the female
rambling sailor.



The Female Rambling Sailor, Australian Trad. Mostly from Martyn Wyndham Read*New lines by Ian Robb

The Scottish folk singer Dick Gaughan has said that for every thousand songwriters you needed a thousand interpreters. Otherwise, when the writer of the song dies the song dies along with them. Penguin Eggs is determined to cultivate and strengthen interest in folk and roots music by printing score sheets to exemplary contemporary songs it considers written in a traditional style. This time around we've actually gone with a traditional song partially re-written by Ian Robb. *The Female Rambling Sailor* can be found on Ian's wonderful new release *jiig*, released on his own Fallen Angle Music. For more information go to www.jiig.ca A big thanks, then to Ian for allowing us to print it. And, as always, much thanks to John Minter for transcribing the notes and words..

Correction: In the last issue we printed the wrong time signature for Maria Dunn's *We Were Good People*. We printed it in 4/4 time and it should have been in 3/4 time. Our sincere apologies to Maria for that oversight. You can get a corrected version from her website at www.mariadunn.com



The Swiftys

South by South West

March 16 - 20

Austin, TX

By Jolayne Motiuk

More than 8000 delegates and holders and thousands of music fans, made their way

to the city that proudly claims to want to "Keep Weird" in their artistic and political viewpoints. In the self-proclaimed "Live Music Capital of the World" Austin Texas, the South by South

West music conference was truly unique and kept weird in a good way with its endless awe-inspiring musical performances, insightful industry discussions and numerous international networking opportunities.

Crash course panel discussions, mentor and demo critique sessions hosted by major labels, international booking agencies and successful independents all aimed at industry newcomers kicked off SXSW in boot camp style bright and early Wednesday morning.

Wednesday night locals and Austin music fans from around the world gathered for The 23rd Austin Music Awards at the Austin Music Hall where Los Lonely Boys repeated last year's Band of the Year victory. Those who got inside early enough were treated to a compelling performance by John Cale and Alejandro Escovedo that began with Cale's *Paris 1919* and ended with a duet of Leonard Cohen's *Hallelujah*. Canadian trans-

plants Gordie Johnson's band Grady was voted Best New Band.

Delegates attending the official kick-off on Thursday morning in the Austin Convention Centre were privy to an acoustic performance by the legendary Mavis Staples, backed by Marty Stuart, who aptly described her as the Queen of Country Music and borrowed from the her vast hit library in saying that "for over 55 years as part of the Staple Sisters she has been *Takin' You There*. Ms. Staples later shared a heartfelt story about her father taking in her mother's sweet potato pastries as "pieola" instead of pie in the early days trying to get his daughters records on radio.

Following Ms. Staples performance and setting a tone for the over 60 panel discussions with 235 conference panelists was a rare and thoroughly entertaining public interview and keynote address by Rock and Roll Hall of Famer, Robert Plant. Those in attendance were

treated with seeing this multi-platinum selling artist receiving his Grammy Hall of Fame Award, and having him share experiences from his Muddy Waters and other blues influences, his candid teenage conversation with Elvis, his story about recently pledging money to a public radio station only if they agreed they would never play *Stairway to Heaven*, and his bright hopes for the future with his new release, *Mighty Rearranger* and his new world beat band, Strange Sensation.

With a rousing night-time performance at the Austin City Music Hall, Plant and his band joined the over 1200 SXSW musical performers from genres ranging from hip-hop to alt. country on 59 stages in venues from the most intimate Hole in The Wall to the expansive Auditorium Shores. And yes the memorable musical experiences were endless – country mavericks Mary Gauthier with Gurf Morlix, and Elvis Costello and The

The Imposters at La Zona Rosa, Rodney Crowell and Jim Lauderdale with a guest appearance by Buddy Miller at Antone's; revival-like shows of The Blind Boys of Alabama and Robert Randolph and His Family Band; and outstanding newcomers Los Super Seven. An array of showcases in grandiose southern mansions, historic

honky tonks and glorious outdoor venues featured up and comers like The Trews, Sara Lee Guthrie & Johnny Irion, and The Swiftys, and the deserving of the world stage Billy Joe Shaver, Old Reliable, Charlie Sexton and Bobby Bare Jr.

A Sunday morning gospel blues jam at a local popular taco stand, afternoon BBQ and softball tournament, and Alejandro Escovedo and Raul Malo raising spirits and funds for a hospital charity at the Continental Club that evening finished off a once again truly memorable experience that is the unique SXSW and wonderfully weird Austin.

Books

**Incurable Blues
The Troubles & Triumph
of Blues Legend Hubert
Sumlin**
By Will Romano
Backbeat Books
\$24.95
Review by Barry Hammond

Thousands of Blues fans are familiar with the primal and staggeringly powerful vocals of Howlin' Wolf, whose voice could practically peel the paint off the walls of many a smoky blues dive. Wolf was a giant of a man, both physically and as an artist. The numerous hits he penned for Chicago's Chess Records: *Smokestack*

Lightnin', Sittin' On Top Of The World, How Many More Years, Forty Four, Killing Floor, and so on, have become blues classics. His renditions of Willie Dixon songs (many written especially for him by Dixon): *I Ain't Superstitious, Evil, Spoonful, The Red Rooster, Built For Comfort, Wang Dang Doodle, Back Door Man, Three Hundred Pounds Of Joy*, are equally classics, often covered by the British Invasion bands who brought the blues back to America via Rock And Roll, and are considered by many to be the definitive versions of those songs. Along with Muddy Waters, he's credited with inventing the Chicago electric blues sound.

But there was another voice on most of those classic records, which contributed in equal measure to their success: the eerie, sliding, stuttering guitar of Wolf's favorite guitar man, Hubert Sumlin. Sumlin is a unique guitar player with an style that: "is percussive as much as it is melodic. Hubert has the ability to play staccato notes and then a glissando run, easily flipping back and forth between the two." He plays without a pick, "almost scratching and clawing the string," and uses both hands, his left "spidering across the guitar's neck."

Sumlin's guitar playing has influenced some of the best guitar players in the world: Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Keith Richards, Jimi Hendrix, Carlos Santana, Jack White, and Colin Linden.

Although not a household name, like B.B. King or Buddy Guy, Hubert Sumlin is their equal when it comes to being a giant of blues history. Whether it was his status as Wolf's sideman (Wolf frequently said he considered Sumlin his son), his ability to play both lead and second (or supporting) guitar with other notables such as

Freddie King, Jody Williams, Willie Johnson, Lee Cooper, Wolf himself, or the fact that he didn't sing much, the idea that he rarely led his own band, preferring to play with others, or his shy, retiring, easygoing, generous nature, it is only in the last twenty years that Sumlin has emerged as a solo figure in his own right.

In Incurable Blues, Will Romano, who has written for magazines like The New York Post and The New York Daily News, tells Sumlin's story.

Born to a sharecropping family in Greenwood, Mississippi, in 1931, Sumlin moved first to Hughes, Arkansas, teamed up with harmonica legend James Cotton, before moving on to West Memphis, and then Chicago, where he met, recorded and toured with Howlin' Wolf and also Muddy Waters for a time.

Romano doesn't give us a dry, academic biography, full of dates, place names, and recording session details. Most bluesmen's lives don't have that kind of documentation. Sumlin and his sister, for example, don't even possess birth certificates. The book is more of a personal tribute, full of Romano's own observations over the years, stories and anecdotes by friends, acquaintances, and fellow-musicians, as well as Sumlin's own colorful reminiscences.

What emerges is a fascinating portrait of a humble, self-effacing, warm and generous-to-a-fault man, who had the stubbornness, persistence, and longevity, through a career of daunting ups and downs, both personally and professionally, and sporadic health problems, to become a musical giant, whose spontaneous outpourings of creativity and emotion on the guitar would carve him a lasting place in the history of the blues.

Incurable Blues, is a must-read for anyone with an interest in Howlin' Wolf.

Muddy Waters, Chicago Blues, or the blues in general. It's also a gripping account of what it takes to succeed, both as an artist and a man. Romano has done the world a favor by finally shining the light of attention on Hubert Sumlin.

Guitar - An American Life
by Tim Brookes

Grove Press
\$35.50
Review by Barry Hammond

As the back cover copy says: "It's a love letter to the guitar, from a guitar-lover extraordinaire."

Brookes has a clear and intimate, conversational style of writing which easily imparts his own interest in all things related to the guitar directly to the reader. In addition to his own observations, he interviews various historians, guitar-makers, curators, the producers and participants of a guitar festival, guitar teachers, and even guitar students along the way, imparting their own viewpoints, as well as dipping liberally into the historic literature on the subject. The result is a compulsively readable and highly enjoyable book.

In no particular order, these are just a few of the fascinating things this critic learned while reading: Al Capone regularly hired a Hawaiian guitar group to play in specially roped-off areas of his mansion to serenade his guests while they were making love. Elvis Presley may have been given a guitar by his parents when what he really wanted was a gun. The acclaimed

black guitarist T-Bone Walker's real name was Aaron Thibeaux Walker. When he first came to Los Angeles he worked as a dancer and one of his stunts was seizing the corner of a table with his teeth and swinging it around. He hated being called T-Bone. There were a large number of women guitar heroes in early rockabilly music, including Wanda Jackson, Cordell Jackson, Martha Carson, Bonnie Buckingham, Peggy "Lady Bo" Jones, Alis Lesley, and Janis Martin. The English guitar, or cittern, often hung in barber shops for customers to play on, may have given rise to the term "slattem" or "slut" because writers, like playwright Ben Jonson, used jokes such as: "That cursed barber... I have married his cittern that's common to all men."

The so-called British Invasion was actually started by a young session player named Vic Flick, who got paid about \$25.00 for the session where he played "the most famous guitar phrase in the history of the instrument, a phrase that would be heard in every country of the world, over and over again for at least four decades, a phrase that single-handedly would give the guitar a new adventurous, dynamic image, sophisticated yet sexy, macho as all get out." The phrase was the "James Bond Theme" in Dr. No and used in every Bond film since.

This is a hugely entertaining book for anyone with the slightest interest in guitars and/or history.



Hubert Sumlin

le quartier français

79
L'HEMISFER
EST
2012



La Viree

Festivals' Folkloriques Québécois

La musique traditionnelle du Québec se régénère et s'amplifie, et les festivals s'ensuivent. Voici des "nouveautés" à propos de trois des rendez-vous musicaux parmi les plus impressionnantes dans le genre - le Carrefour Mondial de l'Accordéon - Montmagny, la Grande Rencontre - Montréal, et Mémoires et Racines, Joliette

Par Tony Montague, traduit par Mary Beth Carty et Sébastien Leduc

La popularité actuelle de la musique traditionnelle Québécoise prend ses origines dans les pauvres années 80, au moment où les médias francophones ont condamné la musique folklorique comme étant démodée, sans espoir. Le traditionnel était associé à la vieille garde nationaliste tandis que la nouvelle génération, presque sans exception, ne s'intéressait pas aux airs de violon, aux rigodons et chansons à répondre de leurs aïeux.

Plusieurs artistes ayant émergés pendant la grande renaissance des années 70, durent gagner leur pain autrement. Les spectacles au Québec étaient difficiles à produire et il n'y avait quasiment aucun festival. Les groupes qui ont survécu à cette période, La Bottine Souriante et Eritage, par exemple, survivaient principalement grâce aux rassemblements folkloriques, spectacles et «coffee houses» (boîte à chansons) du Canada et des Etats-Unis.

Ces artistes revenaient avec des idées nouvelles

sur la manière que pourraient être présenté et promu dans la belle province, leur musique et leur culture tant aimée. Le résultat de nombreuses réunions, levées de fonds et lettres de subvention fut une infrastructure dédiée à la musique folklorique ainsi qu'une série de festival de qualité qui ont leur propre identité mais qui suivent une formule semblable aux festivals de l'ouest canadien basés à Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, et Vancouver.

Le Carrefour Mondial de l'Accordéon à Montmagny, La Grande Rencontre à Montréal ainsi que Mémoires et Racines, les trois festivals d'être folklorique au Québec, apportent une reconnaissance bien mérité aidant à la santé de la musique traditionnelle de la province, agissent comme tremplin pour la création et l'épanouissement de nouveaux groupes tels La Volée de Castors, Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer ou Matapat et : invitent des artistes de traditions différentes de celles des francophones d'Amérique du Nord.

Le Carrefour Mondial de l'Accordéon, fondé en 1989, était le premier événement de ce genre et demeure le plus grand, attirant environ 45,000 spectateurs pendant 5 jours au début de Septembre. Le festival a lieu dans l'attrayante petite ville de Montmagny, sur la rive sud du Saint-Laurent, 50 Km en aval de la ville de Québec et le centre d'intérêt est évidemment l'accordéon et les instruments de la même famille.

«Nous mettons en valeur l'accordéon dans toutes ses variantes, diatonique ou chromatique, concertina ou bandonéon», dit Raynald Ouellet, le directeur artistique, et un excellent accordéoniste lui-même. « Et bien sûr le répertoire de tous les pays où on trouve ces instruments dans la culture populaire. L'idée est de mettre les accordéonistes traditionnels au même niveau que les artistes de jazz, tango, ou classique. Nos sites sont dispersés dans la ville; il y a deux scènes gratuites pendant le jour et quatre ou cinq salles pour les spectacles payants du soir. »

L'attrait de Montmagny pour les accordéonistes précède la fondation du festival. Le fabricant d'accordéon diatonique, Marcel Messervier, qui a ouvert son atelier il y a plusieurs décennies, travaille encore et ; la région engendre un bassin riche en musiciens traditionnels. Maintenant, en plus du Carrefour annuel, il y a un musée de l'accordéon.

Un des co-fondateurs du Carrefour avec Ouellet est Benoit Bourque, accordéoniste, gigueux, et « callieur » avec Le Vent du Nord. Les deux musiciens faisaient partie d'Eritage et c'est lors de leurs voyages avec le groupe qu'ils ont compris que, pour avoir un festival qui fonctionne, il faut avoir une armée de bénévoles et l'esprit ouvert à la musique et aux musiciens. « Il a très bien fonctionné », dit Bourque, un des meilleurs animateurs (dans tous les sens du terme) de la musique Québécoise. « Nous n'aurions jamais pu imaginer qu'il devienne aussi grand, mais c'est encore vraiment amical et accessible. J'y retourne chaque année, plus souvent qu'autrement comme animateur.

« Je fait rire et bouger les gens mais je joue pas beaucoup d'accordéon. Je préfère présenter et accompagner les grands musiciens qui sont là. » Le Carrefour, qui a lieu cette année du 1er au 5 Septembre, donne lieux à des conférences avec des sujets variant de la musique de Bulgarie au Bal Musette ainsi qu'un camp musical la semaine précédant le festival. « Les camps sont une nouveauté », dit Ouellet. « Je vais enseigner l'accordéon diatonique à la québécoise et en plus, il y aura des artistes du Poitou (une région de l'Ouest de la France d'où proviennent plusieurs ancêtres venus colonisé le Québec) qui vont partager leurs connaissances de la musique. »

Les classes et ateliers ont toujours été un élément de La Grande Rencontre, le premier festival traditionnel de Montréal. Il a été fondé en 1992 par les boutes en train de la Société pour la Promotion de la Danse Traditionnelle Québécoise, et présente des concerts, danses et une école de musique. Ils sont tous basés sur l'art de la veillée – chansons, contes, et joie de vivre à la « quelтиque ».

Le directeur artistique de La Grande Rencontre, Gilles Garand, est aussi un de ses fondateurs. Il est excité à l'idée que la 14ème édition du festival va

déménager au Parc Lafontaine et aura lieu à la fin d'août. Jusqu'à maintenant, La Grande Rencontre était en juin, à la fin de la saison culturelle, dit le verbomoteur Garand. Dorénavant, il servira de lancement pour ce qui s'en vient en automne et en hiver. La plus grande scène sera le Théâtre de Verdure, un auditorium en plein air entouré d'arbres et de larges promenades dans le cœur de Montréal. Pour Garand, le Parc Lafontaine est un site ayant une signification historique personnelle. «C'est à cet endroit que j'ai reçu mon baptême culturel voilà 30 ans. Il y avait une veillée extraordinaire qui s'appelait La Veillée des Veillées qui célébrait les liens entre le Québec, l'Acadie et la Louisiane, avec des musiciens comme Jean Carigan et Gilles Losier.»

La musique de ces maîtres a ramené Garand à ses racines culturelles. Il s'est dédié lui-même à la promotion de la culture folklorique, autant la danse que la musique. Mais même si les traditions québécoises sont le noyau de La Grande Rencontre, le festival est ouvert à d'autres sons et genres.

À chaque année, l'événement a un thème. En 2004, c'était la musique écossaise et son influence. Cette année, durant les cinq jours (24 au 28 août), c'est un instrument: l'harmonica. Le Samedi soir, l'auditorium du Plateau accueillera Le Sommet de l'Harmonica avec les meilleures harmonicistes du Canada : Alain Lamontagne, Gerald Laroche, Mike Stevens, Keith Bennett, Don Kavanagh et Gabriel Labbée.

La Grande Rencontre a toujours une série de concert et de danse, de plus, chaque groupe invité joue un spectacle et fait partie d'une veillée. Parmi les participants cet été, on peut trouver la « violoneuse » bostonienne Laura Cortese, les jeunes talents de la musique Québécoise Gentorum, Réveillon, Les Chauffeurs à Pied, et un jeune groupe à capella de filles dans la lignée de la formation Les Charbonniers de L'Enfer dénommée Galant Tu Perds Ton Temps. Il y a aussi un nouveau groupe spectaculaire de musiciens de la rennaissance des années 70, le Trio Quatre, comprenant Michel Bordeleau, Normand Miron, Bernard Simard, et Pierre Laporte.

Garand considère le festival comme faisant partie d'un réseau de la culture indépendante, permettant à la musique traditionnelle de fleurir dans la ville la plus cosmopolite du Canada. « La Grande Rencontre emmène l'école, et l'école emmène 150 étudiants chaque semaine. C'est comme une roue qui tourne. Les gens retrouvent leur propre culture, puis, viennent aux veillées que nous produisons à l'année, attirant environ 300 personnes, en majorité de trente-cinq ans et moins. Il y a vraiment une solidarité générationnelle là-bas et c'est à la grandeur du festival.»

La même capacité à traverser les générations est la marque de Mémoires et Racines, le plus jeune des trois festivals mais avec les plus vieilles racines. L'événement qui dure trois jours a lieu dans un beau parc près d'une rivière aux limites de Joliette (60 Km au nord de Montréal), la dernière fin de semaine de juillet. La plus importante ville de la région de Lanaudière, est un des plus fertiles

terroir de tout l'Amérique du Nord pour la culture traditionnelle. Un mélange unique de familles acadiennes déportées en 1755 des provinces Maritimes, d'habitants québécois et de soldats Irlandais et Écossais de l'armée du Général Wolfe.

Bien après que ces différentes cultures eurent mijoté ensemble, plusieurs groupes de Lanaudière émergèrent : La Bottine Souriante, La Volée d'Castors, Les Charbonniers de l'Enfer. Mémoire et Racines a été fondé en 1995 pour ramener la musique chez eux et en même temps, ouvrir de nouvelles perspectives.

« Le festival est rapidement devenu un événement de trois jours, avec des artistes venant du Québec, d'ailleurs au Canada et aussi d'Europe », dit Gilles Pitre, le directeur général du festival. « La première année, on a eu un groupe du Danemark mais cette année, nous aurons des musiciens Basques et Bretons ainsi qu'un groupe klezmer de Montréal, Kleztoiry. Il y a toujours un côté céltique, donc, en plus des invités de la Bretagne, nous accueillerons Tony McManus, un guitariste écossais extraordinaire. » Naturellement, les vieux musiciens qui jouent encore sont représentés à chaque édition de Mémoire et Racines, événement qui aura lieu du 29 au 31 juillet. « Nous avons des grands accordéonistes qui viennent, Roland Aumont et Jacques Laroche. Il y a des sessions d'improvisation où ils jouent avec des jeunes. Les six scènes extérieures sont acoustiques afin que ce soit simple et intime. C'est un des aspects les plus distinctif et populaire du festival ».

« Nous avons aussi un volet contes et légendes. Ainsi l'an passé, nous avons invité Michel Faubert des Charbonniers et cette année, c'est notre animateur. La musique sur la scène principale est, bien sûr, amplifiée. Mais la dimension du festival demeure agréablement petite. » Pitre anticipe que l'assistance pour l'ensemble du festival sera entre 5000 et 7000 personnes. L'attrait principal demeure toutefois la musique traditionnelle contemporaine avec des performances comme La Bottine, Le Vent du Nord, Galant Tu Perds Ton Temps. La présence du jeune groupe Belzébuth est un bon indicateur de l'état de santé de la scène actuelle et de Mémoire et Racine en particulier.

« Certains jeunes ont commencé à venir au festival à 12-14 ans » souligne Pitre. « Maintenant, ils ont 18-20 et marchent dans les pas de La Volée d'Castors qui a fait de même avec La Bottine. C'est vraiment excitant d'entendre la musique se renouvelée et évoluer constamment. »



Gitan et Tant Mieux

Par Par Mary Beth Cart, traduit par Mary Beth Cart et Sébastien Leduc

J'ai parlé avec Goran Jezdimir, un des membres fondateurs du groupe Les Gitans de Sarajevo, nommé pour un Juno. C'était un matin calme, le calme avant la tempête, dirait-on. Cet après-midi, il donnait des cours de flûte et de saxophone soprano dans deux écoles privés à Montréal. Immédiatement après, il devait se dépêcher pour se rendre au test de son. "On joue presque chaque weekend!" dit Goran, excité.

Dès qu'ils ont commencé à jouer en 1998, le groupe a été vraiment bien reçu. "Croyez-moi, à chaque spectacle, surtout à la fin, les gens dansent. C'est quelque chose d'agréable pour tout le monde." Les membres du groupe ne sont pas nombrilistes, ils se préoccupent de l'opinion de leurs spectateurs. Les chansons de leur premier disque En Voyage ont été choisies parmi leur vaste répertoire d'une façon démocratique. "Voyant la réaction des spectateurs, nous avons pris les chansons qu'ils ont préférées."

Le spectacle le plus marquant fut probablement celui qu'ils ont joué à une fête privée pour le propriétaire du Cirque du Soleil pendant la course de Formule Un à Montréal, il y a maintenant, deux ou trois ans. "Il y avait beaucoup de monde très connu des différents coins de la planète, beaucoup d'acteurs de Hollywood, et nous étions là. C'était vraiment quelque chose d'inoubliable."

Né dans la capitale de la Yougoslavie, Goran a étudié à l'Académie de Musique Classique de Sarajevo. Là, il a rencontré Boris Bartula, le chanteur, accordéoniste et pianiste du groupe. Ils ont aussi étudié la musique ensemble en France et ont fait partie d'un groupe qui jouait différents styles musicaux. Ils seraient probablement toujours dans les Balkans en train de jouer de la



Les Gitans de Sarajevo

musique si ce n'était de la sanglante guerre civile des années quatre-vingt dix. Goran est parti en 1995 avec sa femme et ses deux enfants pour venir au Canada. "J'aurais pu choisir l'Australie ou les États-Unis, mais le Canada me convenait davantage et particulièrement le Québec, qui est plus européen. Montréal est une ville avec beaucoup de cultures différentes et je m'y sens comme dans ma ville natale."

À ce moment là, Goran n'avait aucune idée que Boris avait aussi immigré au Canada. "Après la guerre, on a perdu contact. Je ne savais pas qu'il était venu au Canada et lui non plus. On s'est rencontré sur la rue à Montréal. C'était par hasard. Imagines les retrouvailles!"

Ça fait dix ans de ça. Depuis ce temps là, Goran Jezdimir n'y est jamais retourné. "J'ai de très bons souvenirs du pays mais tout a changé. C'est pour ça que je ne veux pas le revoir. Même le peuple n'est plus comme avant. Des gens sont morts, des familles souffrent encore et la guerre n'a laissé que des ruines." Le conflit eut non seulement un effet sur la population et les villes mais aussi sur les frontières. "Je suis déraciné parce que j'ai perdu mon pays, la Yougoslavie, qui est maintenant divisé en républiques."

Avant les affrontements, Sarajevo ressemblait à n'importe quelle ville canadienne. "On vivait très bien. Il y avait les Musulmans, les Serbes et les Croates. On partageait entre nous sans se préoccuper de nos différences." En plus de la musique extraordinaire qu'ils transmettent, la formation est exceptionnelle parce qu'elle est multiethnique. "Dans le groupe, on n'est de trois ethnies distinctes comme c'était autrefois chez nous sauf qu'on est encore ensemble, et on joue toujours de la musique."

Même si aucun des membres n'est un gitan d'origine au sens de portant-des-guenilles-et-errant-dans-la-campagne-en-caravane, ils voyagent quand même en fourgonnette pour jouer cet été à Gatineau au Québec et à London, en Ontario. "Nous avons choisi la musique tsigane parce que nous sommes devenus des nomades. On a quitté un pays depuis longtemps et on a voyagé partout, comme de vrais gitans." Bien intitulé, leur disque En Voyage vous fera sentir comme un Tsigane grâce à l'authenticité de la musique. Si vous fermez les yeux en l'écoutant, c'est possible que vous vous retrouviez dans une scène festive d'un film par Emir Kusturica (Chat Noir Chat Blanc, Underground). Mais fort probablement, il sera impossible de garder les paupières fermées sauf si vous êtes assez habile pour le faire en dansant.

Goran a pris le temps de me décrire quelques aspects de la culture rom en Europe. "Ils utilisent la musique énormément et y sont attachés. Étant donné qu'ils sont pauvres et maltraités, c'est la musique qui leur donne un peu d'espoir." Contrairement à eux, tous les membres du groupe Les Gitans de Sarajevo sont des musiciens possédant une formation classique. Pourtant, Goran est conscient que ce n'est pas nécessairement l'éducation qui est importante mais la passion pour la musique. Comme il l'a constaté en observant les gitans là-bas : "Qu'ils soient bons ou débutants, ils continuent et ne lâchent pas. Ils sont autodidactes et ils apprennent vraiment vite. Pour eux, la

musique vient du cœur."

Un aspect étonnant de la formation est qu'elle a résisté à la tentation de moderniser sa musique. "C'est très difficile aujourd'hui de jouer de la musique traditionnelle pure. Car pour gagner sa vie, il faut souvent quelque chose de plus afin que le public porte attention à ta musique. Malgré cela, nous n'ajoutons pas d'élément contemporain car ça ne nous correspond aucunement. On n'a rien modifié, ça vient de chez nous, de notre cœur."

Goran comprend bien qu'il faut protéger la tradition. Ainsi, il s'oblige de parler sa langue maternelle, le Serbo-croate, chez lui avec ses enfants. "Mais parfois, ma fille parle au téléphone en Français, et après ça, elle continue avec moi. Je lui dit alors : Non, on parle notre langue à la maison." J'étais curieuse de savoir quelle langue parlent-ils pendant les répétitions. "On parle la langue maternelle. Il y a une fille qui joue violon (Brigitte Dajczer de Calgary, Alberta), avec elle on parle Anglais. Il y a un gars qui vient de Bulgarie (bassiste Georgi Stankov), avec lui on parle Français. C'est un casse-tête parfois!"

Disques

Monsieur Lambert et Compagnie

Récidive

La prûche libre

L'bonhomme est toujours vivant puis avec toutes ses dents, torrieu! Yves Lambert, connu en tant que leader de La Bottine Souriante, rapplique avec un deuxième album solo, premier par contre depuis qu'il a quitté le groupe en 2002. Et quel disque! Cependant, Lambert est loin d'être seul car une multitude de musiciens Québécois l'accompagne formant un immense métissage musical. Il y a entre autre une collaboration avec des musiciens du Moyen-Orient (L'Abri des Bombes), un rock (Rwita), une chanson a cappella (Papa Mignon) une pièce comme « Hommage à Tico Petit » rappelant les années de La Bottine avant les cuivres. C'est un Lambert à l'aise qui s'amuse vraiment (autrement plus, je suppose, qu'avec Cordial, le dernier avec La Bottine Souriante que je trouve moins inspirant) et un enregistrement avec une

chaleur qui le rend essentiel pour tous les amateurs de musique traditionnelle Québécoise.

— Par Richard Thornley. Traduit par Mary Beth Carty et Sébastien Leduc

Genticorum

Malins Plaisirs

Roues et Archets

Les amours perdus, le désir, et le cousinage. De façon évidente, le titre de l'album et la pomme croquée sur le livret suggèrent que l'amour sous plusieurs formes est le thème central du deuxième album de Genticorum. Exception à la règle, au moins trois des titres font mention des chats. Avec leur goût pour la fête, les trois membres nous amènent faire un autre voyage à travers les riches traditions musicales du Québec. Nous sommes choyés avec ces merveilleuses chansons et complaintes, cette série de pièces vivantes ainsi que ces instruments innovateurs comme le nyckelharpa sur Bonnet d'An et la « bass-o-tronic » sur Cascou. Comme nous le répétons sans cesse, il y a une panoplie de groupes qui émergent du Québec présentement et Genticorum est un des meilleurs.

— Par Richard Thornley. Traduit par Mary Beth Carty et Sébastien Leduc

Doba Caracol

Soley

Disques Indica

DobaCaracol est l'enfant musical des meilleures amies et sœurs cosmiques Carole et Doriane. Avec leurs voix limpides et leurs talents de percussionnistes, ces deux jeunes femmes ont créé une des seules musique du monde à sauce pop au Canada. Comparable à Rusted Root, le spectacle de DobaCaracol est unique — on sais jamais quelle percussion elles vont prendre, et dansent en jouant. Le batteur, originaire de la Côte d'Ivoire, chante en Sénoufo ajoutant ainsi de la crédibilité au côté « musique du monde » de la formation. Avec les sons d'orgue entraînantes de Martin Lizotte et les différents rythmes des pièces, DobaCaracol nous fait danser spontanément. Quelques fois, les paroles sont un peu trop hippos et certains doublages de la voix se révèlent trop commercial à mon goût. Recommander quand même à tout ceux qui ont un dreadlock quelque part dans leur cœur.

— Par Mary Beth Carty. Traduit par Mary Beth Carty et Sébastien Leduc



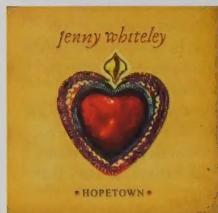
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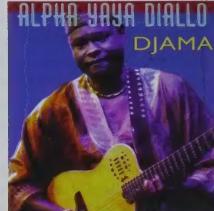
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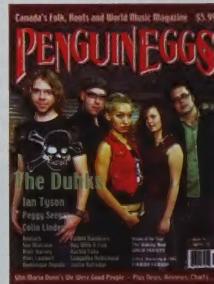
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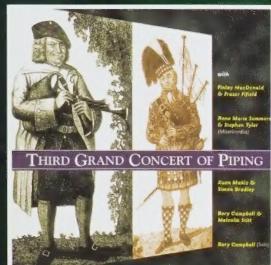
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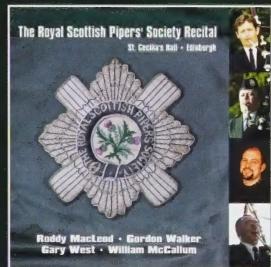
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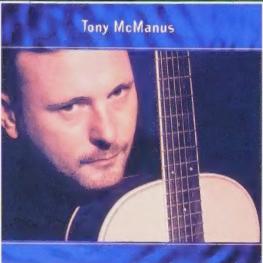
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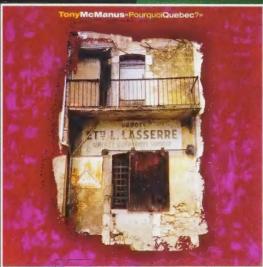
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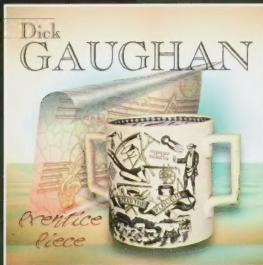
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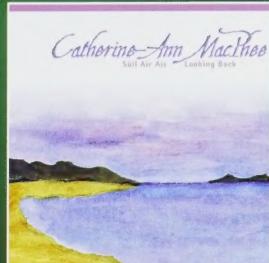
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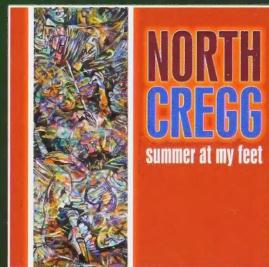
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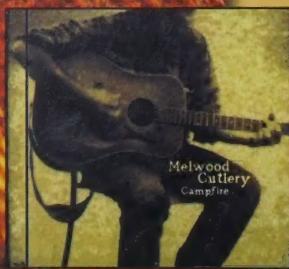
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